

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixty-fifth  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**April 1 and 2, 1995**



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# Report of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 1995. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*The First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*The Council of the Twelve:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*<sup>1</sup> Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Hans B. Ringger, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, F. David Stanley, Kwok

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<sup>1</sup> Elder Ronald E. Poelman was excused.

Yuen Tai, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

*The Presiding Bishopric:* Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

### Solemn Assembly

The first session of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

#### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful April morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the solemn assembly session of the 165th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Carlos E. Asay and L. Lionel Kendrick are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi and Dallas N. Archibald are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are receiving the conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elder Ronald E. Poelman, who is ill.

We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We note with sadness the passing of President Howard W. Hunter, fourteenth President of the Church, who passed away on Friday, March 3, 1995, at the age of eighty-seven after having served as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ for a period of over thirty-five years. During the last nine months he served as God's prophet on the earth and as President of the Church. We pay our honor and respect to this great deceased leader, whom we love, whose ministry blessed the lives of thousands.

The music for this session of the conference will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" and will now favor us with "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Eugene Hansen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. President Thomas S. Monson will then present the General Authorities and general presidencies of the Church for the sustaining vote of this solemn assembly.

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The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

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Elder W. Eugene Hansen offered the invocation.

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## The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Hinckley has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be presented. Those who are standing when appropriately called upon would be the ones who would be given the privilege to vote.

The General Authorities assigned to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square or the Joseph Smith Memorial Building will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. Should there be any negative votes, we ask that we be so advised. We shall now proceed with the business of this solemn assembly.

### *First Presidency*

The First Presidency will please arise. It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor. Those in

favor may manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. The First Presidency will please be seated. We invite Elder Eyring to now take his place with the Council of the Twelve.

### *Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will please arise. It is proposed that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please

Saturday, April 1, 1995

Morning Session

manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

### *Seventy and Presiding Bishopric*

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric will please arise. It is proposed that the members of the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

### *Patriarchs, high priests, and elders*

The following will please arise whenever you may be participating. All ordained patriarchs and all members of high priests and elders quorums, please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed may manifest it. Please be seated.

### *Priests, teachers, and deacons*

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon.

All in favor may please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate. You may be seated.

### *Relief Society sisters*

Will all members of the Relief Society—that is, all women eighteen years of age and older—please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

### *Young women*

Will the young women—that is, all young women ages twelve to eighteen—please arise. It is proposed that Gordon Bitner Hinckley be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so indicate it. You may be seated.

### *Entire Church membership*

Now, will the entire congregation, including all of those who have stood previously, now arise. It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate so by the uplifted hand. Thank you. Any opposed may so



indicate. Thank you. You all may be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we sustain other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church.

It is proposed that we sustain as the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen.

As further members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Loren C. Dunn, Gene R. Cook, William R. Bradford, John H. Groberg, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Dean L. Larsen, Robert E. Wells, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Enzo Busche, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Ronald E. Poelman, F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goaslind, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, J. Richard Clarke, Hans B. Ringger, Marlin K. Jensen, Earl C. Tingey, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Lionel Kendrick, Harold G. Hillam, Carlos H. Amado, Ben B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, Robert K. Dellenbach, Glenn L. Pace, F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Neil L. Andersen, D. Todd Christofferson, Cree-L. Kofford, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., John B. Dickson, Jay E. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and W. Craig Zwick.

As members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J. Ballard Washburn, Durrel A. Woolsey, W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A.

Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, In Sang Han, Stephen D. Nadauld, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John E. Fowler, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Lowell D. Wood, Claudio R. M. Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Lance B. Wickman, and Bruce D. Porter.

As the Presiding Bishopric: Bishops Merrill J. Bateman, Presiding Bishop; H. David Burton, First Counselor; and Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor.

All in favor, please manifest it. If there be any contrary, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Hinckley, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Tabernacle has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. We invite the newly called members of the Seventy to now take their places on the stand. Please come forward, Brethren.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your expressions of faith and confidence. Needless to say, we are overwhelmed by the feeling of love which has been expressed here.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **President Boyd K. Packer**

### **The line of unbroken authority**

Ten months ago President Ezra Taft Benson passed away, and without a pause the brief and memorable adminis-

tration of President Howard W. Hunter began. God bless the memory of this great prophet. Again, now, without the slightest pause, the order of things confirmed in the revelations was imple-

mented with all of our participation, and the Church moves forward on course.

This practice of raising hands to sustain one who has been called to lead or to teach in the Church is a matter of sacred importance. The voting to sustain takes place in meetings, and the sustaining of the First Presidency, now broadcast to the Church across the world, conforms to a revelation from the Lord: "I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by . . . one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11; *italics added*).

Speaking for the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who "agreeable to the institution of heaven" are "to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:33), we affirm to you that in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, our First Presidency, the Twelve *is* one. For in raising our hands to sustain the President of the Church, we continue the line of unbroken authority from the beginning of the Restoration.

### The Twelve bridge the line of authority

Some suppose that the keys of presidency pass from one man to another much like a baton in a relay. Some believe that the Prophet Joseph Smith secretly or privately conferred the keys of presidency upon a successor.

But that is not the order of things. President Ezra Taft Benson did not ordain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Church, nor did President Howard W. Hunter ordain Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Church.

The Twelve bridge the line of authority from one administration to another and keep the line unbroken.

Shortly before the Martyrdom, in a meeting attended by nine members of the Twelve, the Prophet Joseph Smith prophetically said:

"Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. Some important scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me. And in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me *not* be imparted to you, they will be lost from the earth. But if I can only succeed in placing them upon your heads, then let me fall a victim to murderous hands if God will suffer it, and I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared in this dispensation of the fulness of times. Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church henceforth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you" (Draft Declaration of the Twelve Apostles, reporting March 1844 meeting of the Twelve, Brigham Young papers, LDS Church Archives).

Individually and collectively the Twelve hold the keys and have confirmed the authority to exercise all of the keys upon the senior Apostle, the one man who is to preside over the Church.

The Lord has provided a system in which there is no aspiring, no maneuvering for position or power, not even a hint of soliciting for votes or cultivating influence. The system does not allow it, nor would the Lord permit it. It does not work the way man usually works, and so it should be. The Lord reminded the prophet Isaiah, "My ways [are] higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

### Sustaining the prophet

The raising of the hands has been a custom since ancient times, symbolized when Moses was confronted by the

Amalekite robbers, the destroyers of the wilderness:

"Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

"So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

"And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:9-13).

The wicked who now oppose the work of the Lord, while different from, are no less terrible than the plundering Amalekites. The sustaining of the prophet is still an essential ongoing part of the safety of this people. Should age and infirmity cause his hands to grow heavy, they are held up by his counselors at his side. Both are prophets, seers, and revelators, as is each member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

### "We are living Apostles of the Lord"

In 1976 following a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Spencer W. Kimball invited us to a small church to see the statues of Christ and the Twelve Apostles by Bertel Thorvaldsen. The *Christus* stands in an alcove beyond the altar. Standing in order along the sides of the chapel are the statues of the Twelve, with Paul replacing Judas Iscariot.

President Kimball told the elderly caretaker that at the very time Thorvaldsen was creating those beautiful statues in Denmark, a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ was taking place in America with apostles and prophets receiving authority from those who held it anciently.

Gathering those present closer to him, he said to the caretaker, "We are living Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ," and pointing to Elder Pinegar he said, "Here is a Seventy like those spoken of in the New Testament."

We were standing near the statue of Peter, whom the sculptor depicted holding keys in his hand, symbolic of the keys of the kingdom. President Kimball said, "We hold the real keys, as Peter did, and we use them every day."

Then came an experience I will never forget. President Kimball, this gentle prophet, turned to President Johan H. Benthin, of the Copenhagen Stake, and in a commanding voice said, "I want you to tell every prelate in Denmark that they do *not* hold the keys! *I hold the keys!*"

There came to me that witness known to Latter-day Saints but difficult to describe to one who has not experienced it—a light, a power coursing through one's very soul—and I knew that, in very fact, here stood the living prophet who held the keys.

### Apostles bring unity of the faith

The Lord revealed why "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." It is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The ministry of the Apostles—the Presidency and the Twelve—therefore is to bring us to a unity of the faith.

As it has been since the beginning, the adversary would divide us, break us up, and, if he can, destroy us. But the Lord said, "Lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, . . . taking the *shield of faith* wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (D&C 27:15, 17; italics added).

The ministry of the prophets and apostles leads them ever and always to the home and the family. That shield of faith is not produced in a factory but at home in a cottage industry.

The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

### **The shield of faith is made at home**

Lest parents and children be "tossed to and fro" and misled by "cunning craftiness" of men who "lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14), our Father's plan requires that, like the generation of life itself, the shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications.

The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith

is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis.

The prophets and apostles know full well that the perilous times Paul prophesied for the last days are now upon us: "Men [are] lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:2-3).

Knowing it would be so, the Lord warned that "inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes . . . , that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . , the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

"For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion. . . .

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:25-26, 28).

This shield of faith is not manufactured on an assembly line, only hand-made in a cottage industry. Therefore our leaders press members to understand that what is most worth doing must be done at home. Some still do not see that too many out-of-home activities, however well intended, leave too little time to make and fit on the shield of faith at home.

### **God's plan for happy families**

Although our thoughts are centered in this sacred and solemn assembly on the noble titles High Priest, President, Apostle, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, the heavens are not offended if we at once speak of father, mother, child, brother, sister, family—even dad, mom, grandma, grandpa, baby.

If you are reverent and prayerful and obedient, the day will come when there will be revealed to you why the God of heaven has commanded us to address him as *Father*, and the Lord of the Universe as *Son*. Then you will have discovered the pearl of great price spoken of in the scriptures and willingly go and sell all that you have that you might obtain it.

The great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) revealed to prophets is the plan for a happy family. It is the love story between husband and wife, parents and children, that renews itself through the ages.

And so now with an unbroken line of priesthood authority, an unbroken line of priesthood power, we move confidently

forward in unity and faith, led by Christ the Redeemer, whose church this is, and His earthly prophet, through whom He will speak. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Sweet Is the Work."

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### President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will now address us.

## Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

### Book of Mormon translation a miracle

My dear brothers and sisters, do we realize the profound miracle that is the translation of the Book of Mormon? A miracle is "an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., p. 742). Consistent with that definition, the translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith is indeed a modern-day miracle.

### The current process of translation

The Book of Mormon is presently in print in over eighty languages and is now being translated or prepared for publication in many, many more. Consider the Church's current process of translating the Book of Mormon from English into another language. The Church contracts capable, experienced member translators who are fluent in English as well as their native tongue and

who possess integrity and high moral character so that the spirit of inspiration will guide their work. Just as in Joseph Smith's day, the ability to translate holy writ today is a spiritual gift from God.

Unlike Joseph's day, however, many of our modern translators utilize computers and word processors, lexicons and encyclopedias to help and guide them in their sacred assignment. The modern work is extensive, and each step must be critically analyzed by Church translation experts. Yet even with the most competent member translators and advanced technology available, the entire process, from beginning to publication, requires approximately four years.

### Conditions in which Joseph translated

Now contrast the translation of the Book of Mormon by young Joseph Smith. Joseph was raised on a farm in upstate New York and was only twenty-three years of age at the time he completed his

translation of this sacred record from "reformed Egyptian" to English (Mormon 9:32).

He had little financially and was busy supporting his wife and family. Of necessity he planted and harvested crops, chopped wood, hauled water, and cared for animals.

The conditions under which Joseph translated were less than ideal. His life was threatened, and mobs tried to rob him of the plates, requiring him to hide the ancient records and often move them from place to place (see Joseph Smith—History 1:60). Joseph had no telephone, no dictating equipment, fax, word processor, or copy machine—not even electric light.

### **Translated by the gift and power of God**

Joseph had little formal education, perhaps no more than three years of elementary school. Prior to translating, Joseph had not enrolled in a university. There were no literary magazines or academic periodicals delivered to his doorstep. He never visited South America or the Middle East. He belonged to no professional societies, had performed no extensive research projects, nor did he have learned colleagues with whom to discuss the ancient text of the plates. He may have studied basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and perhaps a little American history. We know he read the Bible in English, but by the standards of the world, Joseph was neither a scholar nor a theologian, much less a professional translator of holy scriptures.

What skills did Joseph possess to aid in his translation? Oliver Cowdery, who was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, said of Joseph's source of translating power that "the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . translated [the Book of Mormon] by the gift and power of God, by the [assistance or] means of the Urim and Thummim" ("Last Days of Oliver Cowdery," *Deseret News*, 13 Apr. 1859, p. 48).

Typically a literary work undergoes extensive revisions and editions before a final, finely tuned draft is completed. For example, Abraham Lincoln rewrote his Gettysburg Address five different times, each version varying slightly from the other (see *World Book Encyclopedia*, 22 vols. [Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1992], 8:176–77).

In preparing for this conference address, I had the glorious experience of quietly examining several pages of Joseph's original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which is safely protected in the Church archives. I was overwhelmed at the purity of the transcription, which had only a very few insignificant corrections, such as a misspelled word. Joseph's original manuscript is so perfect it could have come from only one source—divine revelation.

### **Miraculous pace of the translation**

On Joseph's shoulders rested not only the translation of the Book of Mormon but also the restoration and reestablishment of the Church of Jesus Christ. Even as Joseph translated, he received many revelations and visitations from heavenly messengers who gave him additional important assignments, such as the restoration of the priesthood and the revelation on baptism (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–74). Joseph's many responsibilities often interrupted the translation process, sometimes for several months. Yet once Joseph was free to dedicate his entire effort to translation, the work surged forward and he translated eight to ten pages a day, completing the preponderance of the Book of Mormon translation in approximately sixty-three working days (see John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, "The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information" [Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986], pp. 14–27).

Oliver, reflecting on this miraculous event, testified, "Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated . . . the history, or record, called 'The book of Mormon' " (*Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, p. 14).

### Magnitude of the Prophet's work

Joseph was the first person in over 1,400 years to read the words of the Savior as written by Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Moroni, and the other prophets of the Book of Mormon. His ability to translate was nothing short of a "marvelous work and a wonder" (2 Nephi 25:17).

Joseph's original English translation, except for a few minor grammatical and textual emendations, remains the text that we use today and is the standard for all other language translations of the Book of Mormon throughout the world (see *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 1:185-86). As Nephi of old prophesied, his "words shall [whisper] forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto [his] people" (2 Nephi 29:2).

Could any one of us today produce such a work? Could a thousand of the world's best theologians and scholars of ancient languages or antiquities write a similar book of such supernal, transcendent value?

No other person with such limited education and facility as Joseph has single-handedly translated in such a short period of time from ancient writings over five hundred pages of scriptural text. That translation now has seventy-three million books in distribution.

Joseph's translation of this ancient, sacred scripture has withstood the scrutiny of many skeptics. The Book of Mormon stands as a miraculous work for the world to examine. This divine spark from

heaven, over 165 years ago, has ignited a flame that is dawning a new day. No wonder "the Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). All over the world people are seeking the witness of Jesus Christ as found in the Book of Mormon. They come from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. As was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name" (D&C 122:1). And why are they seeking after the name of Joseph Smith? Because the Book of Mormon testifies of the divinity and atonement of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Because Joseph is the prophet of the Restoration.

With deep appreciation for the miracle that transpired through the translation of the Book of Mormon, we sing:

Praise to the man who communed  
with Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and  
Seer.

Blessed to open the last dispensa-  
tion. . . .

Millions shall know "Brother Jo-  
seph" again.

["Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27]

### Evidence that Joseph is a prophet

I testify that the translation miracle of the Book of Mormon clearly evidences that Joseph is a prophet of God, called to "lay the foundation of [Christ's] church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). The Book of Mormon is the "keystone of our religion" and will bring us "nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 194). May we appreciate this miraculous translation, and may it be our desire to come to know and follow the Savior

through his teachings in the Book of Mormon, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Do What Is Right," fol-

lowing which we shall hear from Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

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The chorus and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

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## Elder J Ballard Washburn

Dear brothers and sisters, it's my honor and privilege to join with you in expressing our love and support for President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, President Packer, and the Twelve. I am happy to say that I love you. I am grateful to be one with you in the work of the kingdom.

### Going to the temple as families

Recently after a stake conference, I was talking with a family with teenage children. I said to them, "You must live righteously so that someday you can go to the temple with your parents." A sixteen-year-old daughter responded, "Oh, we go to the temple with our parents almost every week. We go and do baptisms for our family file names." I thought, *What a wonderful thing, for families to go to the temple together.*

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him to the temple. I think it is more than coincidental that our sons and daughters can go to the temple with us when they are twelve years old. Joseph and Mary did not say, "Bishop, will you take our son to the temple?" They took him.

Our efforts as parents, wards, and stakes should be to help our youth live worthily to go to the temple *now*. The goal is the same for young women as for young men: *be temple worthy now*. When the bishop interviews the youth

each year, he will include a worthiness interview.

What a wonderful goal for priesthood leaders and young women leaders to help parents inspire every young woman and every young man to go to the temple every year. What a great blessing for parents to be in the temple with their children, ages twelve and over, at least once a year where circumstances allow.

### The Holy Ghost leads to the temple

One thing that will help us more than anything else to want to be in the temple is to have the Holy Ghost with us.

Two important things are necessary to have the Holy Ghost: first, we must live worthy of it; and second, we must ask for it.

"Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men."<sup>1</sup>

If we will ask in faith, we will receive the Holy Ghost, and it will lead us to the temple.

### Go to the temple worthily

Let me give a word of caution here. We cannot go to His holy house unworthily without bringing upon ourselves



the judgments of God. For God will not be mocked.

When couples who have not fully repented of past sins go to the temple to be married, they are starting their marriages on very shaky ground. I believe this is one of the main causes of divorce in temple marriages. If a man who is *dishonest* in his personal life, as it pertains to his wife and children or his business dealings, goes to the temple, he is heaping damnation upon his own soul and is in great need of repentance.

President Hunter said, "It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church *worthy* to enter the temple."<sup>2</sup> If our young men or young women on their way to the mission field go to the temple unworthily, it is a great mistake. We must prepare them for the temple *first*, and then they will be prepared for missions. President Hunter said, "Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple *worthily* and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call."<sup>3</sup>

### The new and everlasting covenant

The greatest blessings of eternity come to us through the temple. God's greatest gift, eternal life, can come only to a man and woman together. And every worthy person will someday have this blessing. In Doctrine and Covenants 131 we read:

"In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

"And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

"And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

"He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase" (vv. 1-4).

Thus we see that in marriage, a husband and wife enter into an order of the priesthood called the new and everlasting

covenant of marriage. This covenant includes a willingness to have children and to teach them the gospel. Many problems of the world today are brought about when parents do not accept the responsibilities of this covenant. It is contradictory to this covenant to prevent the birth of children if the parents are in good health.

Thirty-five years ago when I first started practicing medicine, it was a rare thing for a married woman to seek advice about how she could keep from having babies. When I finished practicing medicine, it was a rare thing, except for some faithful Latter-day Saint women, for a married woman to want to have more than one or two children, and some did not want *any* children. We in the Church must not be caught up in the false doctrines of the world that would cause us to break sacred temple covenants.

### Keeping temple covenants at home

We go to the temple to make covenants, but we go home to keep the covenants that we have made. The home is the testing ground. The home is the place where we learn to be more Christlike. The home is the place where we learn to overcome selfishness and give ourselves in service to others.

I hope you will not think it simplistic to suggest that it is the "little things" like family prayer and family home evening that are important; little things like a father helping his children say their nightly prayers and telling them a bedtime story instead of watching TV; little things like making time in the family schedule for reading the scriptures; little things like a husband being big enough to say, "Sweetheart, I'm sorry. I should not have said that. I'm going to do better." Or a mother saying to a child, "I'm sorry I became angry. Please forgive me." Yes, it is the little things that we do each day and each week that make the difference.

By keeping the temple covenants, all of God's children may be exalted. I say again that *we go to the temple to make the covenants, but we go home to keep those covenants.*

### Gratitude for homes and temples

The story is told of Elder Boyd K. Packer: After traveling all over the world and seeing many exotic places, he was asked where he would go if he could go anywhere in the world he wanted. He replied, "I would go home." I feel the same way. If I were asked that same question, I would say, "I would go home and sit in a big rocking chair and take a couple of grandbabies in my arms and hope that a little of the heavenly dust they still have on them would rub off on me." I'm grateful for homes where we can go to learn how to love, how to share, how to be Christlike.

I am grateful for temples where we can go to be sealed together as families for eternity. I am grateful for temples where we can go to pray and to worship,

where we can call down the blessings of heaven upon our families. I am grateful for temples where we can go as families to strengthen the eternal bonds that will make us forever families, where we can go to do the great redemptive work for our forefathers, who cannot do it for themselves, even as Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I am grateful that God in his eternal wisdom has made these blessings available to all of his children. Some, however, have to wait until the hereafter to enjoy these blessings. But all who live worthily will have every blessing. I testify that Jesus loved to go to the temple. Part of becoming more Christlike is learning to love to go to the temple. I pray that we may become eternal families, that we may have eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:18.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, p. 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 8; italics added.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, p. 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 88; italics added.

## Bishop Merrill J. Bateman

Brothers and sisters, I express deep appreciation for the marvelous impact that President Howard W. Hunter had on Church members in his short period as prophet. From Hawaii to West Africa, I have seen members responding to his challenge for us to be more Christlike and a temple-worshiping people.

Today I sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church. As I watched the press conference that announced the new First Presidency, the Holy Spirit bore witness to me of his prophetic calling and the preparation that had preceded it. I also felt then and feel today the same confirmation regarding President Thomas S. Monson and

President James E. Faust as his counselors, and President Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve. And today I felt the Spirit with regard to Elder Henry B. Eyring. The Lord's way of preparing prophets is a marvelous work and a wonder.

### Lessons taught by death

A short time ago I attended the funeral of a friend's son. Earlier in the week, the young man was traveling home late at night with friends when the driver of another car fell asleep. The second car crossed the median and smashed head-on into the first. The accident occurred with such swiftness that few,

if any, brake marks showed on the highway and both cars were demolished. The accident took three lives, including my friend's seventeen-year-old son.

In reflecting on the accident, I have thought about the lessons taught by death—particularly the death of a loved one. The first lesson is that life is short whether one dies at seventeen or at eighty. To a seventeen-year-old, eighty years seems like an eternity. But to a seventy-year-old, eighty years is not a long probationary period.

Second, death reminds us that there is a spirit in man. As we viewed the remains of our young friend, it was obvious that more than blood had left his body. The light of his spirit no longer animated his facial expression or twinkled in his eyes. He too had given up the ghost but at a tender, young age.

Another lesson taught by death concerns the importance of eternal families. Just as there are parents to greet a newborn on earth, the scriptures teach that caring family members greet the spirits in paradise and assist them in the adjustments to a new life (see Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:33). While I was standing before the casket, the thought came that separation was not only a shock for the parents but also for the young man as he suddenly found himself on the other side of the veil. I suspect that he would like to tell his parents once more how much he loves them. Brothers and sisters, heaven exists only if families are eternal.

A fourth lesson, and perhaps the most important, concerns the purpose of life. To be meaningful, life must be more than the ephemeral pleasures of youth. There must be a plan. Death, even if accidental, must be part of the plan. Developing faith in and coming to know one's Maker is at the core of the plan. Having hope with regard to one's eternal destiny and experiencing joy must also be part of life's purpose.

### **Atonement heals grief, sorrow, and sin**

Death teaches that we do not experience a fulness of joy in mortality and that everlasting joy can be achieved only with the assistance of the Master (see D&C 93:33–34). Just as the lame man at the pool of Bethesda needed someone stronger than himself to be healed (see John 5:1–9), so we are dependent on the miracles of Christ's atonement if our souls are to be made whole from grief, sorrow, and sin. If grieving parents and loved ones have faith in the Savior and his plan, death's sting is softened as Jesus bears the believers' grief and comforts them through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ, broken hearts are mended and peace replaces anxiety and sorrow. Last week I received a letter from the boy's parents telling me of the peace they have found through their faith in Christ. They know that they will see their son again and be with him in the eternities. As Isaiah stated concerning the Savior, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . And with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

The prophet Alma also spoke of Christ's healing power as he taught the Gideonites. Referring to Christ, Alma stated that he would "go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him . . . their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people" (Alma 7:11–12). Whatever the source of pain, Jesus understands and can heal the spirit as well as the body.

The Savior, as a member of the Godhead, knows each of us personally. Isaiah and the prophet Abinadi said that when Christ would "make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed" (Isaiah 53:10; compare Mosiah 15:10).

Abinadi explains that "his seed" are the righteous, those who follow the prophets (see Mosiah 15:11). In the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins but also experienced our deepest feelings so he would know how to comfort and strengthen us.

### **The power to heal from within**

As part of his redeeming power, Jesus can remove the sting of death or restore the spiritual health of a struggling soul. The scriptures are filled with examples, but a young Korean sister indelibly taught me this lesson. In early 1994, while attending a stake conference in Seoul, Korea, I met Kim Young Hee, a young woman in her twenties. I noticed her beautiful countenance as she sat in a wheelchair on the stand waiting to speak. When her turn came, a brother pushed her chair to the front of the stand but off to the side of the pulpit so she could see and be seen. He gave her a microphone, and she told us her story.

As a young woman, she was healthy, had an excellent job, and was content with life. She was not a Christian. In 1987 she was in a terrible car accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down. Following her recovery in a hospital, she returned to her parents' home wondering what life held for her. She was despondent and empty. One day a knock came at the door. Her mother answered, and two American women asked to share a message about Jesus Christ. The mother was hesitant, but the daughter heard their voices and invited them in. They were missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Kim Young Hee accepted the invitation to receive the missionary lessons. She read the Book of Mormon, prayed about its truthfulness, attended church, and received a witness of the divinity of the Restoration. She was baptized.

As she bore her testimony in stake conference, she said: "I know that Heavenly Father does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart. I also know that the true miracle is the healing within, the change of heart, the loss of pride. Although my physical body may not be healed in mortality, my spirit has felt the healing power of the Holy Ghost. And in the Resurrection a fully restored, perfect physical body will again house my spirit, and I will receive a fulness of joy."

As I listened, the Spirit bore witness of the great miracles of the Atonement and the Savior's power to mend broken hearts, to heal from within. The Savior's parable of the ten lepers took on new meaning. Luke describes Jesus meeting ten lepers. Upon seeing the Savior, they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus responded, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." As they went their way, they were cleansed. One returned, fell on his face at the Master's feet, and gave thanks. Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" And then the Lord said to the one who returned, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (see Luke 17:12-19). In becoming a whole person, the grateful leper was healed inside as well as on the outside. That day nine lepers were healed skin deep, but only one had the faith to be made whole. The tenth leper and Sister Hee were changed eternally by their faith in the Savior and the healing power of his atonement.

### **The Atonement is intimate and infinite**

The Savior's atonement in the garden and on the cross is intimate as well as infinite—infinite in that it spans the eternities, intimate in that the Savior felt each person's pains, sufferings, and sicknesses. Consequently he knows how

to carry our sorrows and relieve our burdens that we might be healed from within, be made whole persons, and receive everlasting joy in his kingdom. May our faith in the Father and the Son help each of us to become whole. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

We have heard from Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy, followed by Bishop Merrill J. Bateman, the Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

## **Elder Robert D. Hales**

### **Expression of love for prophets**

President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, as we raised our hands in the law of common consent during the solemn assembly, we gave our consecration, our love, and our devotion to our prophet, and we sustain the First Presidency. "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days" (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Twice in the space of a year we have lost prophets who are very dear to us, President Ezra Taft Benson and President Howard W. Hunter. These two great prophets of God brought truth and light and joy into our lives. They conveyed to us the word of God. They taught us about the importance of family, studying the Book of Mormon, and living our lives in such a way that we would draw closer to God. They taught us the importance of being kind to one another, obeying the commandments, and how to receive a fulness of joy and merit eternal life. They have pleaded with us to live more Christlike lives, to emulate the Savior in all we do, and to qualify ourselves to be worthy of the saving and exalting blessings available only in the holy temples of the Lord. They gave us words of encouragement and wise counsel to bring more happiness and peace into our lives and into the world. We love them for their obedience and for their concern for us.

Today I join you in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We live in a world of turmoil where we find sadness and destruction in every corner, much of which is brought about by man's failure to listen to the words of the true prophets of God. How different would the lives have been of those who lived in all dispensations if they had listened to the prophet Moses and followed the Ten Commandments?

There has always been a desperate need for the steady and reassuring voice of a living prophet of God—one who will speak the mind and will of God in showing the way to spiritual safety and personal peace and happiness.

### **The Lord protects Jehoshaphat's people**

Our loving Heavenly Father has given the world prophets from the days of Adam. The prophets of old taught well the importance of listening to the voice of prophets. The story of Jehoshaphat found in 2 Chronicles 20 is an example. King Jehoshaphat had several great armies coming to battle with him in an attempt to possess his land. Understandably he was seized with dreadful fear, so he proclaimed a fast throughout all his kingdom and gathered the people of Judah together to plead for guidance from the Lord. Jehoshaphat

humbly and earnestly prayed, "O our God, . . . we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (v. 12).

Then came the answer of the Lord through the prophet Jahaziel: "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, *Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.* . . .

"Fear not, nor be dismayed; . . . for the Lord will be with you" (vv. 15, 17; italics added).

Jehoshaphat and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell in thankful prayer before the Lord.

Jehoshaphat then gave very important counsel that we today would do well to obey. Indeed, just as the people of Judah, our lives may depend upon it—even our eternal lives: "*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*" (v. 20; italics added).

As promised, the Lord protected the good people of Judah. As Jehoshaphat's forces looked on, those armies which came to battle against them fought so fiercely among themselves that they completely destroyed one another before they ever reached the people of Judah. Listen to a prophet's voice and obey. There is safety in following the living prophet.

### Prophets speak plainly and boldly

A characteristic of prophets throughout the ages is that, regardless of the consequences, they have had the strength to speak the words of God with plainness and boldness. As Nephi made an end to his record, he taught:

"And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do

good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

"And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the *plainness of the truth*; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I [the prophet] have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

"*I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus*, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33:4–6; italics added).

### Micaiah speaks plainly to Ahab

Another account of Jehoshaphat illustrates how prophets speak directly and plainly the word of God and let the consequence follow. Ahab, the king of Israel, invited Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to join with him in battle against Syria. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to inquire of the Lord to see if it would be wise to go against the Syrians.

After four hundred of Ahab's so-called prophets told Ahab only what he wanted to hear—that he would be victorious over Syria—Jehoshaphat asked if he didn't have any other prophets. Ahab replied, "There is yet one man, Micaiah . . . : *but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil*" (1 Kings 22:8; italics added).

Jehoshaphat convinced Ahab to seek the word of the prophet Micaiah. The messenger who was sent to bring Micaiah before the kings cautioned Micaiah to tell Ahab only what he wanted to hear. "*And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak*" (1 Kings 22:14; italics added). Micaiah told Ahab that Israel would not return victorious and that Ahab would be killed.

Against the counsel of the prophet, Ahab went to battle and lost his life, and Israel was defeated.

Micaiah, as all prophets before him and all who have followed, spoke the word of God with plainness and truth and let the consequence follow.

### Restoration of prophetic authority

"We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth" (Articles of Faith 1:6).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that it was necessary for the Church of Jesus Christ to be restored in this dispensation and that "all the keys and powers of priesthood held by the prophets of former dispensations must be conferred upon God's chosen representatives on the earth" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 1:168).

The prophet Wilford Woodruff said: "This is the last dispensation. He [the Lord] has raised up men and women to carry on his work, and . . . many of us have been held in the spirit world from the organization of this world, until the generation in which we live" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:284).

Joseph Smith, the Lord's chosen prophet to usher in the Restoration, recorded the following visions received in the Kirtland Temple in 1836:

"After this vision closed," the scriptures tell us, "the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

"After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.

"After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us;

for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

"Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

"To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

"Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors" (D&C 110:11-16).

With the restoration of the priesthood in 1829, there was a restoration of prophets in this dispensation. Living prophets are leading this church today. The greatest security of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints comes from learning to listen to and obey the words and commandments that the Lord has given through living prophets. I would hope that the world would understand the importance of having a living prophet on earth today.

### Come, listen to a prophet's voice

The scriptures tell us that prophets receive commandments "walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4-5).

We sing a hymn that reminds us:

Come, listen to a prophet's voice,  
And hear the word of God. . .  
We've found the way the prophets  
went  
Who lived in days of yore.  
Another prophet now is sent  
This knowledge to restore.  
["Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice,"  
*Hymns*, no. 21]

Another hymn teaches:

We listen to a prophet's voice and  
hear the Savior too.

With love he bids us do the work the  
Lord would have us do.

The Savior calls his chosen seer to  
preach the word of God,

That men might learn to find the  
path marked by the iron rod. . . .

Rejoice! The prophet has confirmed  
that by Him we are known.

Attend, ye earth! The prophet speaks;  
come listen and obey.

He is the man who holds the keys of  
priesthood pow'r today.

[*"We Listen to a Prophet's Voice,"*  
*Hymns*, no. 22]

### **Prophets are prepared by the Lord**

In my own lifetime, through association with prophets, I have observed how they are prepared by the Lord. By the time they become the prophet, their greatest concern is for the goodness and obedience of the members of the Church. They express the love and gratitude they have for faithful Saints and for all who give of their goodness and service in the world in lifting and strengthening others. Their purpose is to bring us the will of the Lord for our times. I give my testimony that the prophets of this day have the qualities of the prophets of old and the other prophets of this dispensation.

Each of these prophets has humbly and prayerfully sought to know and follow God's will in his personal ministry. Each has been determined to declare to Heavenly Father, as did an obedient Jesus Christ before him, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

### **Blessings of heeding prophets**

The desire of the prophets is to assist our Father in Heaven and his Son, Jesus Christ, in bringing about the great objectives of the plan of salvation, or, as

one ancient prophet called it, "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

If we listen to the prophets of this day, poverty will be replaced with loving care for the poor and needy. Many serious and deadly health problems will be avoided through compliance with the Word of Wisdom and the laws of sexual purity. Payment of tithing will bless us, and we will have sufficient for our needs. If we follow the counsel given by the prophets, we can have a life in mortality where we do not bring upon ourselves unnecessary pain and self-destruction. This does not mean we will not have challenges. We will. This does not mean we will not be tested. We will, for this is part of our purpose on earth. But if we will listen to the counsel of our prophet, we will become stronger and be able to withstand the tests of mortality. We will have hope and joy. All the words of counsel from the prophets of all generations have been given so that we may be strengthened and then be able to lift and strengthen others.

### **President Hinckley is our prophet today**

We declare with soberness, and yet with the authority of God in us vested, that we have a prophet today. The President of the Church, as a prophet, is God's representative on earth and is appointed to lead His church. This has been true in the past as recorded in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, with the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He who holds all the priesthood keys authorizing the saving blessings is the living prophet. The Lord has declared, "There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred" (D&C 132:7). I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the *one* in whom those keys are currently vested.



He is our prophet today. He was prepared and foreordained before the foundation of the world. For over a half century he has been taught and tutored by apostles and prophets with whom he has served. He is wise. He is caring. He speaks for the Lord. His is the voice to which we should now respond. Our spiritual safety lies in turning to the clear voice of our living prophet. If we listen to his voice and obey his counsel, we will be able to live as Christ would have us live and endure to the end so that one day we, along with our families, will return back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I humbly add my testimony to the testimonies of all who have sustained

the prophet this day in this solemn assembly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

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### President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Living water to quench spiritual thirst

Early in his mortal ministry, the Savior and his disciples passed through Samaria while traveling from Judea to Galilee. Weary, hungry, and thirsty from their journey, they stopped at Jacob's well in the city of Sychar. While the disciples went in search of food, the Savior remained at the well. He requested a drink from a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water. Because the Jews and Samaritans were divided by rancor and did not often speak to one another, the woman responded to the Savior's request with a question: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament the Savior used this simple encounter at the well to teach powerful, eternal truths. Though weary and thirsty, the Master Teacher took this opportunity to testify of his divine role as the Redeemer of the world and to proclaim authoritatively his true

identity as the long-promised Messiah. He patiently yet thoughtfully answered the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."<sup>2</sup>

Intrigued but skeptical, and seeing that Jesus had no container with which to draw water, the woman queried further, "From whence then hast thou that living water?"<sup>3</sup> In a powerful promise, Jesus then declared himself to be the source of living water, the wellspring of life everlasting. He said:

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."<sup>4</sup>

Missing entirely the spiritual meaning in the Lord's message, the woman, thinking only of satisfying her physical

thirst and of her convenience, demanded, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."<sup>5</sup>

### Live the gospel to be happy

In commenting on the conversation between the Savior and the woman, Bishop Robert L. Simpson taught:

"Throughout history men have always been looking for the easy way. [Some] have devoted their lives to finding the 'fountain of youth,' a miracle water which would bring everlasting life. Today [many] are still seeking . . . some magic 'fountain' that [will] bring forth success, fulfillment, and happiness. But most of this searching is in vain. . . . It is only this 'living water,' the gospel of Jesus Christ, that can and will bring a happy, a successful, and an everlasting life to the children of men."<sup>6</sup>

The Savior's promise to that woman extends to all of our Heavenly Father's children. By living the gospel of Jesus Christ we develop within ourselves a living spring that will quench eternally our thirst for happiness, peace, and everlasting life. The Lord explains clearly in the Doctrine and Covenants that only faithful obedience can tap the well of living water that refreshes and enlivens our souls: "But unto him that *keepeth my commandments* I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."<sup>7</sup>

### Many Samaritans believe

When the woman said she knew the Messiah would come, Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am he."<sup>8</sup> He demonstrated his power of prophetic discernment by telling the woman personal details about her life that only one with divine insight could have known. Astonished, the Samaritan woman left her water pot and hurried off to tell others of her interview with the Lord, saying,

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"<sup>9</sup> While she gathered those of her city who would listen, Jesus taught his now-turned disciples that he already had "meat to eat that ye know not of."<sup>10</sup> To his puzzled disciples who were carrying the food they had acquired, he explained, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."<sup>11</sup>

When the crowd of curious Samaritans arrived to see and hear the man who had proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, "they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days."<sup>12</sup> The scriptures tell us that many believed the Savior's teachings. As they listened, their initial curiosity matured into testimony. They declared, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."<sup>13</sup>

### Latter days a time of spiritual thirst

These latter days are a time of great spiritual thirst. Many in the world are searching, often intensely, for a source of refreshment that will quench their yearning for meaning and direction in their lives. They crave a cool, satisfying drink of insight and knowledge that will soothe their parched souls. Their spirits cry out for life-sustaining experiences of peace and calm to nourish and enliven their withering hearts.

Indeed "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."<sup>14</sup> Let us work with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to show our thirsty brothers and sisters where they may find the living water of the gospel, that they may come to drink of the water that springs "up unto everlasting life."

## **Jesus is the only source of living water**

The Lord provides the living water that can quench the burning thirst of those whose lives are parched by a drought of truth. He expects us to supply to them the fulness of the gospel by giving them the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to bear personal testimony as to the truth of the restored gospel to alleviate their thirst. When they drink from the cup of gospel knowledge, their thirst is satisfied as they come to understand our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness.

As at Jacob's well, so today the Lord Jesus Christ is the only source of living water. It will quench the thirst of those suffering from the drought of divine truth that so afflicts the world. The words of the Lord to ancient Israel spoken by the prophet Jeremiah describe the condition of many of God's children in our own day: "My people . . . have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out . . . broken cisterns, that can hold no water."<sup>15</sup> Too many of our Heavenly Father's children spend their precious lives carving out broken cisterns of worldly gain that cannot hold the living water that satisfies fully their natural thirst for everlasting truth.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Savior, now returned to Jerusalem, extended this timeless, universal invitation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."<sup>16</sup>

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined living water as "the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel." He went on to explain, "Where there are prophets of God, there will be found rivers of living water, wells filled with eternal truths, springs bubbling forth their life-giving draughts that save from spiritual death."<sup>17</sup>

## **Prophets refresh us with living water**

The Lord has declared that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."<sup>18</sup> We are blessed to live in a day when prophets and apostles live on the earth. Through them we are refreshed continually by an abundant stream of eternal truth that, if obeyed, brings the living water of the Lord into our lives. Echoing those Samaritans who listened to the Savior at Jacob's well, we too can say with faith and with firm conviction, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."<sup>19</sup>

We miss hearing the voice of President Howard W. Hunter. Surely it was the love, hope, and compassion of Jesus Christ that we heard in President Hunter's simple eloquence. He raised us to new heights of understanding and urged us to renew our commitment to keep sacred covenants. He reminded us that "Christ's supreme sacrifice can find full fruition in our lives only as we accept the invitation to follow him."<sup>20</sup> When President Hunter asked us to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness,"<sup>21</sup> his personal example of these Christlike virtues taught us with a persuasive power that transcended even his unforgettable spoken words. He encouraged us to drink more often and more deeply of the living water to bring spiritual enrichment into our lives.

## **Drink living water at the temple**

President Howard W. Hunter said: "It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it." He wanted every one of us to

be strengthened by the "sanctity and safety which is provided within [the] hallowed and consecrated walls" of the house of the Lord.<sup>22</sup> What better way to become more closely acquainted with the Savior and to strengthen our commitment to be more like him than to visit frequently his holy house and drink deeply of the living waters that are there. President Hunter wanted us to qualify ourselves through righteous living for the blessings of beauty, revelation, and peace that can be enjoyed in our temples; hence, his oft-repeated invitation "to establish the temple . . . as the great symbol of [our] membership" in the Lord's church.<sup>23</sup>

### **President Hinckley, the Lord's anointed**

Today we have sustained President Hunter's successor. I rejoice with you in the opportunity we have had in this solemn assembly to sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and as spokesman for our Lord Jesus Christ here on the earth. He is the Lord's anointed. He holds all priesthood keys and is authorized to exercise them in leading and directing the kingdom of God. President Hinckley is a faithful servant of the Lord, whose heart and voice we know well. We have come to love him through his thirty-seven-year ministry as a General Authority of the Church. Nearly thirty-four years ago he was ordained an Apostle, a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the longest-serving General Authority now living. When President Hinckley was called to the Twelve, the Church had 1,900,000 members and 336 stakes compared with 9,000,000 members and more than 2,000 stakes today.

Born of a noble father and a saintly mother, President Hinckley learned as a young boy the truths of the restored gospel from his faithful parents. He

came to respect deeply and value highly his pioneer heritage. He served valiantly as a young missionary in England. Throughout his adult life he has worked tirelessly to build the kingdom. He has served under eight Presidents of the Church, including fourteen years as a counselor to the last three: Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter.

President Hinckley's preparation for his current service has been lifelong. As President Boyd K. Packer reminded us recently, "No man comes to be the President of this church except he has been apprenticed for a lifetime."<sup>24</sup> From the scriptures we learn that those who serve as prophets were "prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God."<sup>25</sup>

I bear my witness that President Hinckley has been foreordained, raised up, prepared, and called of God "to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."<sup>26</sup> I have been well acquainted with him since my early youth and have observed firsthand that the fabric of his noble character contains not a single shoddy thread. From the living water of the Lord and his restored gospel, President Hinckley has drunk deeply throughout his entire lifetime. Because of his righteous obedience, streams of living water have flowed and will continue to flow from him<sup>27</sup> to quench the thirst of a spiritually parched world.

I am grateful today to sustain President Thomas S. Monson and President James E. Faust as counselors in the First Presidency. They too have been tried and tested in the service of God and all humankind over many years. They are valiant and faithful. These three presiding high priests of the First Presidency merit our loyalty and devotion. We can sustain and follow them with absolute trust and confidence.

### Bring living water to all who thirst

As one who also stands as a special witness, I join my testimony with those believing Samaritans of long ago. Brothers and sisters, to you and to all the world I testify in all soberness that this same Jesus of Nazareth who spoke with the woman at Jacob's well "is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."<sup>28</sup> He lives today. He is our Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father. He stands at the head of this church that bears his name. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stand as his duly authorized and ordained servants, charged with the sacred and solemn responsibility to guide his church in these latter days. Our responsibility "is to do the will of him that sent [us]"<sup>29</sup> and bring that living water to all who thirst for it. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John 4:9.
2. John 4:10.
3. John 4:11.
4. John 4:13-14.
5. John 4:15.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, p. 96.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 63:23; italics added.
8. John 4:26.
9. John 4:29.
10. John 4:32.
11. John 4:34.
12. John 4:40.
13. John 4:42.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
15. Jeremiah 2:13.
16. John 7:37.
17. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73), 1:151-52.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
19. John 4:42.
20. "He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 2.
21. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4.
22. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
23. *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
24. "President Howard W. Hunter—He Endured to the End," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, p. 30.
25. Alma 13:3.
26. 3 Nephi 5:13.
27. See John 7:38; Doctrine and Covenants 63:23.
28. John 4:42.
29. John 4:34.

### President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We are mindful of the effort many of you have made to be here this morning. Some of you were in line long before sunrise. This Tabernacle, which once seemed so large, has become very small in terms of those who desire to attend. We need a much larger place of assembly, although we would never be able to build a place large enough to accommodate the full needs of this vital, growing church.

Thank you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for your vote of confidence this morning. We are overwhelmed by the meaning of this. I'll speak further of that in other sessions.

We appreciate the kindness of owners of television and radio stations and cable systems and all who have made it possible for us to reach out across the world.

This wonderful Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder V. Dallas Merrell of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The chorus sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder V. Dallas Merrell offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 165th Annual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 1995, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, with Brother James Kasen conducting and Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, President Faust made the following remarks.

### **President James E. Faust**

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who was sustained this morning in the solemn assembly as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 165th Annual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Joseph B. Wirthlin, J. Richard Clarke, and Dennis

B. Neuenschwander are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders John K. Carmack and W. Mack Lawrence are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, under the direction of Brother James Kasen, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days." The invocation will be offered by Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Hope of Israel," following which Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will read the auditors' report. Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, will then present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1994.

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The choir sang "Hope of Israel."

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## The Church Audit Committee Report for 1994

### **Ted E. Davis**

The Church Audit Committee is independent of all Church officers, employees, operations, and departments, including the Church Auditing Department, and reports directly to the First

Presidency. We have access to all records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibility. We have reviewed the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over receipts and expenditures of funds and that safeguard assets of the Church and its controlled

organizations, including budgeting, accounting and reporting, and the auditing systems and reports, for the year ended December 31, 1994.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under the direction of the Appropriations and Budget Committees.

The Church Auditing Department is currently conducting an audit of the financial activities of the Church and its affiliated companies for the year ended December 31, 1994, in compliance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also performs financial audits, operational audits, and audits of computerized information systems for all Church operations worldwide. Its staff consists of certified public accountants and other professionally qualified auditors. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church operations and departments and reports its findings directly to the First Presidency.

Incorporated businesses owned or controlled by the Church maintain their own accounting and reporting systems in compliance with accepted business practice and are audited by the Church Auditing Department and/or independent public accounting firms. Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education are audited by independent public accounting firms.

The Church Auditing Department has established audit procedures for audits of local ecclesiastical units and also monitors local unit audit results and local unit expenditures.

The Church Audit Committee, based on its review of financial and control policies and procedures and its review of all audit reports issued in 1994 and responses thereto, is of the opinion that in all material respects, Church funds received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1994, have been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee  
Ted E. Davis, chairman  
Donald D. Salmon  
James B. Jacobson

## The Church Statistical Report for 1994

### F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1994. The statistics are based on 1994 reports available prior to this conference.

### Church units

Stakes . . . . . 2,008

Districts . . . . . 709  
Missions . . . . . 303  
Wards and branches . . . . . 21,774  
Nations and territories with  
organized wards or branches . . . . 156

### Church membership

Total membership . . . . . 9,024,569  
Eight-year-old children of  
record baptized during 1994 . . . 72,538  
Converts baptized during 1994 . . 300,730

## Missionaries

Full-time missionaries . . . . . 47,311

## Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*President Ezra Taft Benson*, thirteenth President of the Church, at age ninety-four, on May 30, 1994; *President Howard W. Hunter*, fourteenth President of the Church, at age eighty-seven, on March 3, 1995; *Elder Clinton L. Cutler*, a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy;

*Elder Sterling W. Sill*, an emeritus General Authority; *Eudora Widtsoe Durham*, widow of Elder G. Homer Durham, a former member of the Presidency of the Seventy; *Weston Eugene Hamilton*, a member of the General Church Finance Committee; *Oakley S. Evans*, a former president of the Tabernacle Choir.

## President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

# Elder M. Russell Ballard

## Answers to life's questions

Life's most challenging questions seem to be those that begin with the word *why*. "Why is life so hard?" "Why is there so much sorrow, hate, and unhappiness in the world?" "Why does death take the young?" And "Why must the innocent suffer?" We all have wrestled with such questions from time to time as we struggle with the vicissitudes of mortality. I particularly want to talk to the younger members of God's family about why I believe the only satisfying answers to such questions come from the comforting perspective of faith in our Heavenly Father and his eternal plan for our happiness.

The prophet Alma called the plan "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). It is known more commonly as the plan of salvation. It is beautiful in its simplicity to all who seek prayerfully to know and understand the true meaning and purpose of life.

## The plan of redemption

Through prophets past and present, God has revealed the doctrines of his "great plan of happiness." It consists of infinite, eternal, absolute, unchanging

principles. From Alma we learn that "God gave unto them commandments, *after having made known . . . the plan of redemption*" (Alma 12:32; italics added). The plan teaches that all who have or will live on earth are the spirit children of heavenly parents. We lived with them before coming to this earth to receive our bodies of flesh and bone.

"If Adam [and Eve] had not transgressed [they] would not have fallen, but [they] would have remained in the garden of Eden. . . .

"And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy. . . .

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:22-23, 25).

After the Fall, God instructed Adam to cleave unto his wife, Eve (see Genesis 2:24; Moses 3:24; D&C 42:22). "God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28), a commandment that has never been rescinded.

Our Father's plan provides for redemption from the Fall through the atonement of Jesus Christ. As the Only Begotten Son of God and the only sin-



less person to live on this earth, he made a perfect atonement for all mankind. It applies to everyone unconditionally as it pertains to the resurrection from temporal, or physical, death, for all shall rise from the dead with immortal bodies as a result of the Atonement. However, the Atonement is conditional as it pertains to each person's individual sins. It touches everyone to the degree that he or she has faith in Jesus Christ, repents, and obeys the gospel. Exaltation and eternal life with God are reserved for those who keep the commandments.

### **The role of mortality in God's plan**

Mortality, then, is the time to test our ability to understand our Heavenly Father's plan and, of course, our willingness to be obedient. Obedience is essential to obtain exaltation and eternal life. King Benjamin explained that "the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe [in] Christ . . . , the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy" (Mosiah 3:13).

He also taught his people: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

### **Learn doctrines and commandments**

What a wonderful, warm, and reassuring thing it is to know that the primary objective of the very God of heaven is "the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), or, in other words, our eternal happiness and joy. Sometimes I wonder if we really appreciate

what that means and how it should affect our lives. We must give adequate attention to the doctrines of happiness—real happiness, infinite and eternal. They should be the objective of everything we teach in the Church and of everything we do.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 256).

We must understand the basic doctrines and receive the saving ordinances that are essential for our eternal exaltation and happiness. Our present mortal state places a veil of forgetfulness over our minds, allowing us to prove ourselves able to "do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command" (Abraham 3:25). But even though our present long-range view of eternity is limited, the Lord has not left us without direction. He has provided scriptures and apostles and prophets through whom he has revealed his plan for our exaltation and eternal life. And we have the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to guide us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "in obedience there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness . . . he never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256–57).

### **The role of agency in God's plan**

Critical to our knowledge of the plan of happiness is an understanding of the

great governing principle of agency. A person does not have to spend much time in the schoolroom of mortality to realize that Heavenly Father's plan does not provide for blissful happiness at every step along our mortal journey. Life is filled with harsh realities that tug at the heart and tear away at the soul.

One cannot look at suffering, regardless of its causes or origins, without feeling pain and compassion. I can understand why someone who lacks an eternal perspective might see the horrifying news footage of starving children and man's inhumanity to man and shake a fist at the heavens and cry, "If there is a God, how could he allow such things to happen?"

The answer is not easy, but it isn't that complicated either. God has put his plan in motion. It proceeds through natural laws that are, in fact, God's laws. Since they are his, he is bound by them, as are we. I recognize that for purposes we mortals may not understand, the Lord can control the elements. For the most part, however, he does not cause but he allows nature to run its course. In this imperfect world, bad things sometimes happen. The earth's rocky underpinnings occasionally shift and move, resulting in earthquakes. Certain weather patterns cause hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and drought.

Much adversity is man-made. Men's hearts turn cold, and the spirit of Satan controls their actions. In foreseeing the day of suffering in our time, the Savior said, "The love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound" (D&C 45:27). Violence, immorality, and other evils run rampant on the earth. Much adversity has its origin in the principle of agency.

We tend to think of agency as a personal matter. If we ask someone to define "moral agency," the answer will probably be something like this: "Moral agency means I am free to make choices for myself." Often overlooked is the fact

that choices have consequences; we forget also that agency offers the same privilege of choice to others. At times we will be affected adversely by the way other people choose to exercise their agency. Our Heavenly Father feels so strongly about protecting our agency that he allows his children to exercise it, either for good or for evil.

### **Living the plan brings joy and peace**

The plan of happiness is available to all of his children. If the world would embrace and live it, peace, joy, and plenty would abound on the earth. Much of the suffering we know today would be eliminated if people throughout the world would understand and live the gospel.

We mortals have a limited view of life from the eternal perspective. But if we know and understand Heavenly Father's plan, we realize that dealing with adversity is one of the chief ways we are tested. Our faith in our Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, is the source of inner strength. Through faith we can find peace, comfort, and the courage to endure. As we trust in God and his plan for our happiness with all our hearts and lean not unto our own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5), hope is born. Hope grows out of faith and gives meaning and purpose to all we do. It can give us comfort in the face of adversity, strength in times of trial, and peace when we have reason for doubt or anguish.

### **Make decisions based on God's plan**

By focusing on and living the principles of Heavenly Father's plan for our eternal happiness, we can separate ourselves from the wickedness of the world. If we are anchored to the correct understanding of who we are, why we are here on this earth, and where we can go after this mortal life, Satan cannot threaten our happiness through any form of temptation. If we are determined to live by

Heavenly Father's plan, we will use our God-given moral agency to make decisions based on revealed truth, not on the opinions of others or on the current thinking of the world.

For example, we are moving into an era when the information superhighway will have the capacity to cut a wide path right into our homes. With fiber-optic computer technology, it can link homes to an incredible assortment of messages and influences. This highway will be the conduit of information that will have the power to change our culture and, thus, our very lives. As we consider the importance of nourishing our intellects with the promising potential of superhighway resources, we must be ever cautious about the choices of programs and the impact of media in our lives. Those who understand our Heavenly Father's eternal plan for the joy and happiness of his children will be better prepared to make good choices as the information superhighway rolls across the world. The computer, television, satellite, microchip, and even the telephone, all can bless and enhance our lives—or can make them miserable.

This is why making life's decisions based on our Heavenly Father's plan is so important. If we truly believe that we are his children and are here on earth to learn to live, by faith, the teachings and the commandments of God and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, we will make the choices that will qualify us to one day return to live in their presence.

### **Obey commandments to find happiness**

Understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ and following him as our Savior and our Redeemer will influence every aspect of our lives, including all of our individual choices. Those who live according to Heavenly Father's eternal plan will not want to absorb any information that is illicit or untoward, nor will they destroy their spiritual sensitivity through immoral

acts or the consumption of any harmful substances. Neither will they search for doctrinal loopholes to find reasons to challenge the ordained leadership of the Church nor tamper with the simple truths of the gospel. They will not attempt to justify any lifestyle that is contrary to the plan of happiness. If they do any of these things, they will never find the inner peace and joy that living the gospel brings. All of our Father's children can seek prayerfully to know who they are and can find real happiness if they obey God's commandments and endure to the end. Elder Howard W. Hunter said:

"There is nothing sad or gloomy about a person who accepts the truths of the gospel and incorporates these principles in his daily living. God wants all of his children to be joyous and glad, and we can have this blessing if we are willing to keep his commandments and live by his word in all that we do" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 108).

### **Answers are found in the gospel**

When the plan of our Heavenly Father is understood, the answers to life's questions are found in the gospel of Christ. May we learn to accept with faith the doctrines and teachings of the gospel and accept the plan of salvation with believing hearts and minds. Always know, brothers and sisters, that the leaders of the Church understand and accept the gospel plan and will defend it at all times and in all places.

My testimony coincides with the testimony of the beloved Apostle John: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). May we search for the doctrines and commandments of the great plan of happiness; and when we learn them, may we embrace them willingly. By doing so we will find lasting joy, happiness, and peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth,

give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

I leave you my testimony that the Lord's promise of peace comes from knowing and living the principles of our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness. May his peace and joy be with all of us I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Faust

We have listened to Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Henry B. Eyring, who was sustained this morning as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Becoming more humble

Many years ago I went on assignment to Brazil. As part of the trip I was to travel by car from São Paulo to a conference in a city about two hours distant. A member of the Quorum of the Twelve was going to preside at that conference. I hoped to ride in the car with him so that I might learn. But he suggested that I make the trip in another car with missionaries. He said, "Teach them while you travel."

When I climbed into the front seat of the car, I learned that two young lady missionaries, companions, were going to that city for a transfer. After we had become acquainted, I leaned back over the seat and asked, "What would you like to know about?" Both of them, eagerly and almost in chorus, said, "Tell us how we can become more humble."

You might have struggled with that as I did. I only remember the green hills of Brazil going by as I tried—and the feeling at the end that I failed. If only I could have that chance again on this beautiful day. I have learned some things about their question since President Hinckley invited me to meet with him yesterday afternoon and issued the call to this sacred office. I think I could help them a little more now.

### "Always remember him"

First, I would have realized that they already had the first lesson in their hearts. The fact that they even asked meant that they had gone beyond being overwhelmed by their doubts about themselves to hope that if they would just submit, if they could just learn what to do, they could be better. If I had the chance again, I would have told them that. And then I would have given them just this one bit of counsel—counsel about what to do. I would have said just this: "Always remember him" (Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79).

I would have tried to help them do that by taking them in their minds to a garden where they would hear the Savior of the world's words: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

And then I would have taken them forward in time to that glorious day reported in the Book of Mormon when the resurrected Lord appeared to the people in the Americas and said, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which

I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

I know from the softness I heard in their voices and saw in their eyes that those missionaries would have then, and perhaps always, remembered him. And from his perfect example they would have felt their hearts breaking and received the answer to their pleading, "Tell us how we can become more humble."

### **The humble proclaim the gospel**

When we drove away from them in the city of our destination, they were standing waiting for a bus. I looked back. There they stood alone. I wish I had known what I learned last night so that I could have read to them while they were in the car these words from the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the twenty-third verse:

"That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers."

And then starting at the twenty-sixth verse:

"And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

"And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;

"And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time" (vv. 26–28).

They would have known the Savior spoke of them. And then in their humility they would have found that they were given power to proclaim his name.

### **Blessings of remembering the Savior**

Over the last hours I have come to understand other blessings from "always remembering him." I thought of a family in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I met years ago: a father, mother, and two teenage daughters who belonged to no

church but read the Bible together every day. They pondered the Savior's life and his words. When we found them they had decided that Christ would have a church and that they should find it. They knew that it would have prophets and apostles at its foundation because that is what Christ had left in his church in the meridian of time. They knew that the resurrected Lord had appeared to his Apostles.

And so when we testified that God the Father and his Son, the Savior of the world, came to a boy prophet, Joseph Smith, that seemed right to them. When they heard us testify that Peter, James, and John appeared and restored the priesthood, they knew that would have to have happened. And the Holy Spirit, which they also recognized, told them it was true. I realized sometime last night or early this morning that they recognized the truth—that this is the Church of Jesus Christ—in large part because they had always remembered him. Every day they had gathered to read about him and his words, and so they remembered him. And after they were baptized they were ready to follow the living prophet because they knew the Savior always speaks to his prophets to bless his people.

### **I will keep my covenant**

I will keep my covenant to take his name upon me and always remember him. And I will go wherever I am sent to teach of him and offer the ordinances by which we take his name upon us and promise that we will always remember him and keep his commandments.

And if they accept that invitation, they will know what I know: God, our Father, lives. His Son, Jesus the Christ, did the will of the Father and atoned for all of our sins. Because of him we will be resurrected. Because of his atonement we may be exalted. The Lord sent heavenly messengers to confer keys on his prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord has called his prophet today, Gordon B.

Hinckley. The Savior will speak to us and all the world through him.

And if those who hear will take the Savior's name upon them and always remember him and keep his command-

ments, they will finally come to him and he will take them home to his Father and our Father, where we may live forever in families. I testify that is true, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Sister Aileen H. Clyde

### **"Fear thou not; for I am with thee"**

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:10; see also 3 Nephi 22:10).

Such scriptural language overwhelms my reasoning and floods me again with the reality of God's love and of our importance to him. Did he speak to our intelligences in that way in the long-ago council when we understood enough to choose to follow Christ? It was surely then, before our mortal experience, that we began with our part of building the covenant relationship with the Savior which is vital to our eternal lives. I believe we chose to be guided then, as we need to be guided now, by his loving care for our divine and unique identities. Our decision then was of the greatest import. Now, when we face crossroads and dilemmas, we can look again to that same source for courage to move forward on our journey.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

### **Seek God's light and forsake the world**

Of the many blessings that have come to me through my knowledge of Christ's gospel, I am most grateful for the doctrine that teaches us that our lives here have eternal meaning and are for the glory of God. We are central in

his great work. He teaches that as we receive his light, we can reflect that light in the world.

There is a constant struggle to balance our knowledge of light against the error and fear that are among the hallmarks of our world. Today we see temptations of old in new ways. They can be magnified and multicolored by technology which gives them avenues everywhere. These portrayals are aimed at the young, the naive, and the vulnerable—indeed they are aimed at each one of us. All manner of violence is depicted in arcade games, and we even see horrifying violent acts in our own neighborhoods. Amid the danger, our love waxes cold, and we may seek a defense in the very weapons that threaten us. Worse yet, we may be turned by fear to looking for protection *from* one another rather than keeping our promise to be a light and a protection *for* one another.

The Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 16 brings clarity to distinctions that Christ's disciples need to understand:

"Break not my commandments for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come.

"And whosoever will lose his life in this world, for my sake, shall find it in the world to come.

"Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls" (vv. 27–29).

We must depend on the light of Christ to understand this teaching, but we cannot allow our fears to separate us from the possession of our souls. Hear

what is recorded in the 101st section of Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

"Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

"And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life" (vv. 36-38).

### **"I the Lord . . . will hold thine hand"**

It is a response of the soul when we sense and accept the loving promises that Christ extends to us. Listen to Isaiah's description of what our Lord has already done for us:

"Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Isaiah 42:5).

Then Isaiah records the Lord's soul-nourishing tenderness and the loving-kindness of his assurances:

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. . . .

"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth" (Isaiah 42:6, 9-10).

The book of Alma teaches that the song He has asked us to sing is a song of redeeming love (see Alma 5:26).

### **The Lord's command to love**

Later, when the Savior was asked in Palestine to designate the first and great commandment, he unhesitatingly said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second [commandment] is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

These statements are both clear and comprehensive. They suggest the *beginning* of how we can engage ourselves in his covenant. And surely, since he knows us, he would not have required anything we cannot do.

The love Christ commands requires a mighty change and great humility. It requires us to forsake pride and to be stripped of envy. It requires that we neither mock our sisters and brothers nor persecute *anyone*. Christ knew that for us to find any of those characteristics in ourselves would be onerous and would demand our great effort just to look. He said, "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee" (Matthew 18:8).

He was not suggesting our mutilation but rather showing his awareness of how painful clearing ourselves of such offenses could be. When we have made the changes that only we can make, then, by the atoning blood of Christ, we may receive the forgiveness that only he can bring. The reciprocal nature of those actions suggests the high trust and respect the Lord has for our abilities. Anyone who has had experience with the Lord's love knows of the sure courage that comes when we keep our part of that trust and honor him by seeking his Spirit and by living the best we can. We hear again:

"My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed" (Isaiah 54:10; 3 Nephi 22:10) and "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (3 Nephi 22:11; see also Isaiah 54:11). Such scriptural language rivets my attention.

## Covenants provide foundation

In the midst of a troubling world, the foundations I rely on come by my covenants with the Lord. They are indeed like sapphires and are treasures beyond price. Through them I have an eternal link to my loved ones and to God. They are the restored principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are available to righteous women and men alike through the power of the holy priesthood of God. They include baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, and temple covenants. These are the ways given to us and freely chosen by us to vouchsafe our eternal lives.

"And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

We are, then, because of his great love and because of our desire to be guided by his light, part of the family of Christ. Because of our covenants, we

have protection from loneliness and alienation. Because of our relationship with him, we can reflect light and tenderness to one another and we can possess our own souls eternally.

I testify of the great blessing it is to know these things. I am humbly grateful for scriptural testaments and for my knowledge that Christ is alive and heads his church. I know he can be alive in each of us as we keep his commandments, and I say this humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Henry B. Eyring, a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve, followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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## Elder Eduardo Ayala

### Isolated members in Peru keep the faith

Due to the nature of our calling as General Authorities, we are assigned to visit various nations, places, or groups. In some of these, there are risks and dangers. The varying circumstances under which these areas function frequently prevent us from reaching the places we have been assigned to visit.

On one occasion I received the assignment to visit a stake located in the beautiful mountains of the Peruvian highlands. This unit of the Church had not been visited by a General Authority for

more than two years because of the dangers involved in traveling there. After obtaining proper authorization and with the help of the mission president, we commenced the five-hour trip that took us to the beautiful Mantaro River Valley.

When we arrived at the stake center, the president and his counselors were waiting for us. Upon seeing us, their faces lit up with happiness and we joined in a strong, brotherly embrace. Some three years previous, two of our beloved missionaries had been killed in this city. After embracing the president close to my heart, trying to communicate to him all



my love, I asked, "Have you suffered greatly during this time in which we haven't been able to come?" He answered with his eyes filled with tears, "Yes, we have suffered greatly, but we have kept the faith." This simple phrase touched our hearts, and we could feel that the hand of the Lord had been with them in the difficult circumstances they had experienced as a people and as members of the Church.

During our meeting with them, we learned many things, one of which was how to keep the faith in areas such as these, far from large cities and far from the headquarters of the Church. In the things that we learned, we were able to distinguish at least five principles which aided them to overcome their difficulties.

### **They trusted in the Lord**

First, they never stopped trusting in the Lord, and they placed all of their faith in him. This was the foundation for their assurance. They trusted in the fact that he would protect and guide them. The Lord has said, "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

Occasionally in the midst of our desperation we seek other ways, other guides. But those who counsel us are not always prepared to help because they do not understand our spiritual needs. They are not prepared to give us the counsel and the revelation that we need in trying circumstances.

We have the great example of the sons of Mosiah, who endured so much adversity and so many trials. Because of the trust they had in the Lord, "the Lord did visit them with his Spirit and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted. . . . Yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instru-

ment of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:10-11).

### **They prayed faithfully**

Second, they remained faithful in prayer. Each member, whether adult, child, or adolescent, faithfully followed this holy practice each day, praying individually and as families with all of their faith. As we know, prayer is the means by which we communicate with our Heavenly Father. He listens to us because we are his children and he loves us, and he is anxious to bless us when we keep the commandments.

As the Savior instructed the Nephites, he taught them, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21). No one could have given them greater assurance that they would be heard by the Father than his own Son.

### **They studied the scriptures**

Third, they never stopped studying the scriptures. In the scriptures they found faith to overcome fear, solutions to their problems, divine comfort from the Master, the loving counsel of the Father, and especially the assurance of being guided in righteousness toward eternal life. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They lived this commandment even in the midst of all their difficulties. One of the Saints there said, "We have never been as close to the Lord as when we were reading the scriptures."

### **They implemented priesthood programs**

Fourth, they implemented priesthood programs. Due to the fatal incident that had taken place there, it was necessary to remove full-time missionaries. In

order to make up for the help that was lost, it became necessary to organize the returned missionaries so that they could teach the gospel to those who wanted to hear it. References came in from member families. Home teaching increased. Nobody was overlooked. Just as they said, they had kept the faith.

### **They humbled themselves**

Fifth, they humbled themselves before the Lord. They purified their lives; they repented; they tried to live together as Saints, sharing much of what they had, fasting when problems arose or when they were threatened.

These simple yet powerful principles enabled them to sustain themselves, to be preserved, to remain faithful and active as members of the Church in that area.

### **Courage to keep the faith**

What wonderful teachings we are able to find in these distant and isolated villages, where frequently it is difficult to sustain a religion or to live the principles of the gospel. We would imagine that it is also difficult to sustain life there and to keep the faith. Only their confidence in God and their faith in Jesus Christ sustain them, move them, and purify them.

Keeping the faith must also be a challenge for those who are alone in the Church, for those whose families are not converted, for those who have lost a companion, a spouse, or a child. Great courage is needed in order to continue onward, but we always have comfort from on high.

Our pioneers did not complain; they did not deny the faith or turn back. It is difficult to conceive of the great loneliness of the people of the Church during those first years when they were a small group, the only Church members on all the face of the earth. They were

persecuted, humiliated, rejected, and some were killed. The faith which they developed in the Lord, in the face of so much adversity, made them strong and humble at the same time. It must have been very difficult to keep the faith when there was so much opposition, so much loneliness, so much anguish. It was a glorious time, a time of martyrs, a time in which to lay the foundation of a courageous and inspiring religion such as ours.

President Kimball said regarding this theme: "Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 98).

How grateful we are for those who, with their simple example, allow us to follow without fainting, seeking to return to our Father. Perhaps isolation makes small and distant towns and villages stronger and more pure.

### **Prophets' loving influence**

At the close of the conference in that stake, I assured the members that God loved them, that the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles were mindful of them, and that this was the reason we were there—to give them our testimony of the fact that they were part of the Church, that we had not forgotten them, and that we prayed for them. There was gratitude in their hearts, and again they smiled as humble members who had been comforted by the Spirit of the Lord.

As he gave the closing prayer in one of the conference sessions, a worthy elderly man, nearly eighty years of age, expressed well the ways in which they remember the prophets. In his prayer he said, "Heavenly Father, we give thee thanks for having sent one of thy servants here to the Mantaro Valley, where thy beloved servant, President Kimball, knelt down and blessed this land that

it would feed us and always provide us a livelihood."

How fortunate and privileged we are to be today in the presence of the prophets of God and to receive their loving influence. Due to the worldwide growth of the Church, a large number of our good members have never had the privilege to be near one of these wonderful leaders at any time during their lives. But I testify to you that they love the General Authorities, that they are following their teachings, and that they await humbly and patiently the day in which they can be at the feet of the prophets.

### **Let us keep the faith**

The conditions of peoples and of nations change due to progress in the world; nevertheless, in many such places, be it in the frosty mountain heights, in the warm valleys, at the rivers' edges, or in the desert places, wherever members of our church are found, there will always be those who live these basic principles, and by so doing they bless the rest of the people. Let us face our earthly challenges courageously in spite of where we live or whatever difficult circumstances we may be called to endure. Let us keep the faith.

We are fortunate this day to be able to sustain a new prophet and his counselors, whom we love and support. In the coming days, in nearly all the nations of the earth, even in the most remote towns and villages, our members will also have the privilege of raising their hands joyfully to sustain them as we have done today.

Someday our journey here on the earth will end, and we will return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. I pray that on that day we may have the same courage and give the same testimony given by the Apostle Paul to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

May the Lord bless us to continue being valiant, humble, and faithful. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

We have just listened to Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., who was sustained as a Seventy at October conference, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## **Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.**

### **Seeing ourselves as Jesus sees us**

As I express my appreciation for the privilege of being with you in this historic conference and for the opportunity to sustain our beloved prophet and his associates, I must also express gratitude—first, to the Lord for the opportunity to serve in this holy calling; and second, to all who have nurtured, tutored, and supported me. My family, particularly my wife, Sharon, has always been willing to provide what I have needed. Many

friends and colleagues, both in and out of the Church, have tried to understand what this assignment means to me and have been most thoughtful and encouraging. The Brethren have been particularly patient and kind, and I will ever be grateful to those who have lovingly helped me through these many weeks of self-evaluation and adjustment.

During this recent process of self-examination, I confess I have wondered what others might think about this appointment which has come to me. I have

reflected on the words of the poet Robert Burns, which I modernize with no disrespect intended: "Oh, what . . . a gift to give us, to see ourselves as others see us" ("To a Louse"). If it is of interest and of importance to recognize how we are viewed by others, particularly those about whom we care the most, then what a gift it must be to understand how the Savior sees us.

### **Become like the Savior**

And how are we to know how we are perceived by Jesus Christ? By how closely we conform to the standards that he has established for us and by the purity of the intents of our hearts. He is the one who has provided the perfect pattern and the perfect standard for all mankind not only by all that he is and did but with his compellingly clear question and invitation: "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). To do as he asks and to be what we should assure us of his approval. But to do otherwise invites his disappointment.

He who not only knows us best but loves us most has provided through the grandeur of his atonement all that we need to compensate for our failings, mistakes, sins, and disappointments if only we accept his invitation to come to him by way of the narrow gate and the strait path identified by his prophets (see 2 Nephi 31) and obtain the blessings made available to all who seek them through his authorized agents.

For those of us who love the Savior and strive to please him, President Gordon B. Hinckley in an earlier day has reminded us:

"As his followers, we cannot do a mean or shoddy or ungracious thing without tarnishing his image. Nor can we do a good and gracious and generous act without burnishing more brightly the symbol of him whose name we have taken upon ourselves" (*Be Thou an Ex-*

*ample* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], p. 90).

### **Minister to the many and to the one**

In his parable of the good Samaritan, the Son of God clarified his expectations for all people who would want to be like him (see Luke 10:30-37). Not only did he model and teach the attitudes and actions that he expects and requires from each of us, but he also provides the ordinances and covenants whereby we, through his duly appointed servants, might obtain all the blessings he has promised, both proximate and timeless.

With his magnificent compassion and power, the Savior was able to miraculously feed the multitudes of thousands when conditions required it (see Luke 9:10-17), but he was also willing to take the time to provide "living water" with its guidance to eternal life to the solitary sinner of professedly low status (see John 4:7-26). He graciously preached the gospel to large congregations but also was inclined to take time for a seemingly insignificant Nathanael and his individual questions (see John 1:45-51).

### **Be involved in the Savior's ministry**

He who under the direction of the Father had created the world and literally could do it all himself involves others in his ministry. At the time of his crucifixion he asked his beloved John to care for his mother, Mary, as if she were John's own mother (see John 19:25-27). During our time, Jesus Christ himself, together with his Father, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and yet Moroni was given the privilege and honor to be his agent in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. This is the Savior's church, and yet he has called President Gordon B. Hinckley to preside over us during our day. I certify with gratitude, but also with some hopefully appropriate trepidation, that the Lord has called you and

me to represent him in various important ways and duties, whether they seem large or small to us.

As we strive to better understand how Jesus sees us and contemplate our own attempts to live as the Redeemer would have us live, let us remember his instructing observations and their uni-

versal applications in literally all that we do: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Children of the covenant

The title of my message is the scriptural phrase "children of the covenant."<sup>1</sup> In introducing this topic I will reflect on recent events as a colleague of President Howard W. Hunter and as a father and on earlier experiences as a doctor of medicine.

These past weeks have been challenging for Sister Nelson and me. Not only have we bid farewell to our beloved President Hunter, but thirty-three days earlier we suffered the demise of our precious daughter Emily. A mother of five young children, Emily had just celebrated her thirty-seventh birthday when called to the other side.

President Hunter influenced Emily's life in a real way. She welcomed his invitation for all adult members of the Church to hold a temple recommend. She and her husband, Bradley Wittwer, regarded their regular time in the temple as a sacred privilege. They viewed "the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants."<sup>2</sup> She strived to emulate the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even though illness brought intense suffering to President Hunter and Emily, an angry word never fell from their lips. Instead they chose to endure with loving faith. When well-meaning friends and family expressed concern for Emily, she cheerfully replied, "Don't worry; I'll

be OK!" Even when she concluded a telephone call, she did not close with the customary "good-bye." She would say, "I love you!"

When President Boyd K. Packer and I last visited President Hunter, he beckoned for Sister Hunter, reached for her hand, and said with a smile, "I feel better when you are near me."

My tears of sorrow have flowed along with wishes that I could have done more for our daughter and for our President. If I had the power of resurrection, I would have been tempted to bring them back. Though one of the ordained Apostles, each of whom is entrusted with all the keys of the kingdom of God, I do not hold keys of the Resurrection. Jesus Christ holds those keys and will use them for Emily, for President Hunter, and for all people in the Lord's own time.<sup>3</sup>

Emily and President Hunter had no fear of death. They had made and honored sacred covenants with the Lord, and they knew that his covenants to them will be kept with equal fidelity.<sup>4</sup> They lived nobly as "children of the covenant."

### Identification and indoctrination

Years ago as a young medical student I saw many patients afflicted with diseases that are now preventable. Today it is possible to immunize individuals against conditions that once were disabling—even deadly. One medical method by which acquired immunity is

conferred is inoculation. The term *inoculate* is fascinating. It comes from two Latin roots: *in*, meaning "within"; and *oculus*, meaning "an eye." The verb *to inoculate*, therefore, literally means "to put an eye within"—to monitor against harm.

An affliction like polio can cripple or destroy the body. An affliction like sin can cripple or destroy the spirit. The ravages of polio can now be prevented by immunization, but the ravages of sin require other means of prevention. Doctors cannot immunize against iniquity. Spiritual protection comes only from the Lord<sup>5</sup>—and in his own way. Jesus chooses not to inoculate, but to indoctrinate. His method employs no vaccine; it utilizes the teaching of divine doctrine—a governing "eye within"—to protect the eternal spirits of his children.

In so teaching, Jesus often established his own identity,<sup>6</sup> then the identity of his followers. I quote his words to the people of ancient America. He said, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God."<sup>7</sup>

"All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after . . . have testified of me.

"And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

"The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant."<sup>8</sup>

A giant step toward spiritual immunity is taken when we understand the expression "children of the covenant." To what covenant did the Savior refer? "The covenant which he made with Abraham."<sup>9</sup> The Lord added, "I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time."<sup>10</sup>

## The Abrahamic covenant

The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham<sup>11</sup> and reaffirmed with Isaac<sup>12</sup> and Jacob<sup>13</sup> is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises:

- Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to eternal increase and to bear the priesthood;
- He would become a father of many nations;
- Christ and kings would come through Abraham's lineage;
- Certain lands would be inherited;
- All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed;
- That covenant would be everlasting—even through "a thousand generations."<sup>14</sup>

Some of these promises have been accomplished; others have yet to be. I quote from a prophecy given nearly 600 years B.C.: "Our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham."<sup>15</sup>

Precisely as promised, the Master appeared in these latter days to renew the Abrahamic covenant. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared: "Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, . . . my servant Joseph. . . . This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham."<sup>16</sup>

We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these

promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments.

Elijah the prophet came to plant a knowledge of these promises made to the fathers.<sup>17</sup> Later the Book of Mormon came forth as a sign that the Lord had commenced to gather children of the covenant.<sup>18</sup> This book, written for our day, states:

“Then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel . . . is already beginning to be fulfilled. . . .

“ . . . For behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.”<sup>19</sup>

### **The new and everlasting covenant**

Indeed the Lord has not forgotten us. And to ensure that we do not forget him, children of the covenant receive his doctrine and claim it by covenant. Brigham Young said: “All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. . . . They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God and no other kingdom.”<sup>20</sup>

At baptism we covenant to serve the Lord and keep his commandments. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew those covenants. We may receive covenants of the priesthood<sup>21</sup> and the crowning blessings of the endowment, the doctrine, and the covenants unique to the holy temple.

The new and everlasting covenant of the gospel allows us to qualify for marriage in the temple and be blessed to “come forth in the first resurrection” and “inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . to [our] exaltation and glory in all things.”<sup>22</sup>

Children born to parents thus married are natural heirs to the blessings of the priesthood. They are born *in the*

*covenant*. Hence, “they require no rite of adoption or sealing to insure them place in the posterity of promise.”<sup>23</sup>

Rewards for obedience to the commandments are almost beyond mortal comprehension. Here children of the covenant become a strain of sin-resistant souls. And hereafter President Hunter, Emily, other children of the covenant, and “each generation would be linked to the one which went on before [in] the divine family of God.”<sup>24</sup> Great comfort comes from the knowledge that our loved ones are secured to us through the covenants.

### **Unity among children of the covenant**

Latter-day Saints understand the word of the Lord, who declared, “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.”<sup>25</sup>

“This great unity is the hallmark of the true church of Christ,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley. “It is felt among our people throughout the world.” President Hinckley continued, “We pray for one another that we may go on in unity and strength.”<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the world, however, strident voices are engaged in divisive disputation and name-calling. Often demeaning nicknames are added to—or even substituted for—given names. Unfortunately, terms of derision obscure the true identity of children of the covenant.

In contrast, God employs names that unify and sanctify. When we embrace the gospel and are baptized, we are born again and take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> We are adopted as his sons and daughters and are known as brothers and sisters. He is the Father of our new life. We become joint heirs to promises given by the Lord to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity.<sup>28</sup>

## A peculiar people

Peter used uplifting terms in a prophecy regarding our day. He identified members of the Church as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."<sup>29</sup> The adjectives *chosen*, *royal*, and *holy* we recognize as elevating. But what about *peculiar*? A modern dictionary defines *peculiar* as "unusual," "eccentric," or "strange."<sup>30</sup> What kind of compliment is that?

But the term *peculiar* as used in the scriptures is quite different. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term from which *peculiar* was translated is *segullah*, which means "valued property" or "treasure."<sup>31</sup> In the New Testament, the Greek term from which *peculiar* was translated is *peripotesis*, which means "possession" or "an obtaining."<sup>32</sup>

Thus we see that the scriptural term *peculiar* signifies "valued treasure," "made" or "selected by God."<sup>33</sup> For us to be identified by servants of the Lord as his *peculiar* people is a compliment of the highest order.

## Becoming spiritually protected

When we know who we are and what God expects of us—when his "law [is] written in [our] hearts"<sup>34</sup>—we are spiritually protected. We become better people. When the Nephites were truly righteous, they avoided divisive nicknames and "there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. . . . There were no . . . Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God."<sup>35</sup>

That lesson from history suggests that we also delete from our personal vocabularies names that segregate and hyphens that separate. Paul taught that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither

male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>36</sup>

He invites us "to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God."<sup>37</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored in these latter days to fulfill ancient promises of the Lord. It is part of the "restitution of all things."<sup>38</sup> Committed children of the covenant remain steadfast, even in the midst of adversity. We shall "be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son."<sup>39</sup> Yet we are strengthened by this promise of the Lord:

"Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things. . . .

"Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel."<sup>40</sup>

With that doctrine implanted deeply within our souls, the sting of death is soothed and spiritual protection is provided. Children of the covenant will be blessed—here and hereafter—I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 20:26.
2. Howard W. Hunter, quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
3. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), pp. 397–98; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:128.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
5. Rules of agency and accountability still apply, however. Choice and accountability are divine gifts nearly as precious



as life itself. "Even the children of the covenant will be rejected except they make good their title by godly works" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 540). Children of the covenant are to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy (see Exodus 31:12–13, 16–17; Ezekiel 20:20) and obey all of God's commandments.

6. For examples, see 3 Nephi 9:15; 11:10; 20:31; Ether 3:14; Doctrine and Covenants 6:21; 10:57; 11:28; 14:9; 19:24; 35:2; 36:8; 43:34; 49:28; 51:20; 52:44.
7. 3 Nephi 20:31; italics added.
8. 3 Nephi 20:24–26; italics added.
9. 3 Nephi 20:27.
10. 3 Nephi 20:29; italics added. See also 1 Peter 5:6; 3 Nephi 5:25; Mormon 5:12; Doctrine and Covenants 93:19.
11. See Genesis 17:1–10; 22:15–18; Galatians 3:28–29; Abraham 2:9–11.
12. See Genesis 26:1–5, 24.
13. See Genesis 28:1–4, 10–14; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.
14. 1 Chronicles 16:15. See also Genesis 17:1–10, 19; Leviticus 26:42; Acts 3:25; LDS Bible Dictionary, "Abraham, Covenant of," p. 602.
15. 1 Nephi 15:18; italics added. Other prophecies convey similar meaning. Among them are the following:

"Many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—

"And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their

Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (1 Nephi 15:13–14).

"Then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfil the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 16:5).

"And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.

"And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel" (3 Nephi 16:11–12).

"Thou shalt preach the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth in these last days, the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel" (D&C 39:11).

16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–31. The Lord also told the Prophet Joseph Smith: "As I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed" (D&C 124:58).

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.

18. See 3 Nephi 29:1–9.

19. 3 Nephi 29:1, 3. As part of that promise, certain lands were to be inherited. While most descendants of Israel received their inheritance in the Near East, the choice land of the Americas was reserved for Joseph (see Ether 13:8). It was to be the repository of the plates from which the Book of Mormon would be translated. It was also destined to become world headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From there the restored gospel would go forth to bless all nations of the earth—according to the promise. Devout men, women, and chil-

dren are being gathered in our day, turning to the truths of salvation that they have not heard before.

The Book of Mormon has many prophecies pertaining to the old and new cities of Jerusalem. For example, "Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance" (3 Nephi 20:46).

"And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

"Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.

"And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come—after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel—

"And that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type" (Ether 13:3–6).

20. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 160.

21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:39–40.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.

23. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 446.

24. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, p. 10.

25. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27. "Christ and his people will ever be one" ("Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3).

26. In Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 5.

27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

28. See Galatians 3:29; Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11.

29. 1 Peter 2:9. Moses also employed the term when he said, "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a *peculiar* people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2; italics added).

30. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 965.

31. See LDS Bible Dictionary, "Peculiar," p. 748; "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary," *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1983), p. 82, word 5,459.

32. Forms of the Greek suffix *poiesis* are seen in words currently in use in the English language. For example, doctors and druggists use a book known as a "pharmacopoeia," which refers to possession or obtaining of pharmaceutical agents. The English word *onomatopoeia* refers to a sound like its referent, such as "buzz," "crack," or "twang." The term used for the making of blood in the body is known as *hematopoiesis*.

33. *Peculiar* is used in only seven verses of the Bible. In the Old Testament it is used five times (see Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; Ecclesiastes 2:8). In each instance it has been translated from the Hebrew term that means "valued treasure." In the New Testament, *peculiar* is used two times (see Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). In each instance it has been translated from a Greek term that signifies "possession," or "those selected by God as His own people."

34. Romans 2:15; see also Jeremiah 31:33; Mosiah 13:11.

35. 4 Nephi 1:15, 17.

36. Galatians 3:28; see also Colossians 3:11. Speaking of correct names, we are reminded of a proclamation given by the Lord: "Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Je-

sus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (D&C 115:4). He did *not* say, "Thus shall my church be *named*." He said, "Thus shall my church be *called*." Members have been cautioned by the Brethren, who wrote: "We feel that some may be misled by the too frequent use of the term 'Mormon Church' " (*Member-Missionary Class, Instructor's Guide* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982], p. 2).

37. 2 Nephi 26:33. Additional scripture declares that God "made the world and all things therein, . . . and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:24, 26).

The commandment to love our neighbors without discrimination is certain. But it must not be misunderstood. It applies generally. Selection of a *marriage partner*, on the other hand, involves *specific* and not *general* criteria. After all, one person can be married to only *one* individual.

The probabilities of a successful marriage are known to be much greater if both the husband and wife are united in their religion, language, culture, and ethnic background. Thus, in choosing an eternal companion, wisdom is needed. It's better not to fly in the face of constant head winds. Occasional squalls provide challenge enough. Once marriage vows are taken, absolute fidelity is essential—to the Lord and to one's companion.

38. Acts 3:21.

39. Doctrine and Covenants 101:4.

40. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9–11.

### President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. of the Seventy, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

## Elder David B. Haight

### Foreordination of President Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, this has been a historic and blessed day. As I have witnessed the inspired manner in which President Gordon B. Hinckley fulfilled his calling as a counselor to Presidents Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter—during their periods of declining health—I rejoice with you in sustaining him as God's anointed prophet.

With all the inspiration and love that I possess, I testify that Gordon B. Hinckley was foreordained to become the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to be the mouthpiece of God on the earth at this time, and to

lead God's people as prophet, seer, and revelator.

President Hinckley's calling Thomas S. Monson to continue in his effective administration in the First Presidency, now as First Counselor, and James E. Faust as Second Counselor is inspired.

President Monson has demonstrated an unusual ability to lead and inspire others—whether members of this church or other non-Church organizations—in their desire to serve the Master. As a newly called Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles twenty-five years ago, my assignments were chaired by then Elder Thomas S. Monson. He was my kind but effective teacher, schooling me in a more clear understanding of the

worldwide mission of the Church and the duties and blessings available to a newly called servant of God. He was most effective and kind to me.

President James E. Faust has impressed me not only with his abilities, experience, and knowledge of this divine work, but as a valued friend and adviser sitting next to me in our council meetings for these many years. He is gifted with an abundance of wisdom and uncommon spiritual direction and discernment that will be a blessing to the Church.

These words of the prophet Alma are most appropriate at this time:

"And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; . . . therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling" (Alma 13:3).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was." The Prophet Joseph continued, "I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 365).

President Gordon B. Hinckley now wears the mantle given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was foreordained to this high and holy calling in premortal councils.

### God prepares his servants

Those of us who sit at the feet of President Hinckley, President Monson, and President Faust marvel at their wisdom, understanding, and protection of sacred matters. God's hand directs this work. He prepares His servants. He

knows their hearts. He knows the end from the beginning and raises up those servants who will carry out His designs.

These are able, humble leaders, called by God to preside over His earthly kingdom in these last days. They are true and faithful servants, tested and refined by extreme circumstances. They are teachers and preachers of righteousness, examples to the world of goodness and obedience to God's commandments. We all would do well—for ourselves and our posterity—to heed their counsel.

An early Apostle, Elder Orson Hyde, said: "It is invariably the case, that when an individual is ordained and appointed to lead the people, he has passed through tribulations and trials, and has proven himself before God, and before His people, that he is worthy of the [position] which he holds. . . . Some one that understands the Spirit and counsel of the Almighty . . . is the [one] that will lead the Church" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:123).

No man better understands the Church, nor is better known to the members of the Church, than President Gordon B. Hinckley.

### Heed the prophet's words

On April 6, 1830—the date of the organization of Christ's restored church (165 years ago this week)—Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were sustained as the presiding officers of the Church. Called of God, Joseph was designated by revelation to be a seer, translator, prophet, and apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God the Father and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:1–2; 21:1). The Lord instructed the small group of faithful Saints:

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"... Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard" (D&C 21:4-5, 7).

This revelation given to the Prophet Joseph is relevant for each prophet and President of the Church, as well as the members of the Church, for all of us to heed.

### **President Hinckley's preparation**

I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley has been carefully prepared for this divine calling from before the foundations of the earth in heavenly councils.

He was born into a family of faith, devoted people, devoted to the precious truths of salvation as contained in the holy scriptures and the revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith. His parents set lofty examples and taught him how to work and to finish a task, which inspired him to attain a good education and a desire to serve mankind.

He accepted the challenges of missionary work and gained the blessings of sharing the gospel with others when called as a missionary to England.

New talents were developed as he assisted his mission president in London in developing Church publicity for the media and for the members of the Church and for the world. That interest has continued throughout his years and continues on, of course, to the present day.

His responsibilities in the Church missionary program added new methods and opportunities to proclaim gospel principles, and he was instrumental in expanding missionary work, particularly throughout the vast, teeming Orient, in a most remarkable way.

He has participated in the dedication and rededication of more temples than any other presiding officer in the

Church. That is not only indicative of his love for temple work, but it reflects the necessity for us to be actively involved in the work of redeeming our deceased ancestors.

President Hinckley's marriage to his sweetheart, Marjorie Pay, added spiritual strength and increased desire to advance our Lord's work. She has been a most inspiring companion for nearly fifty-eight years.

### **A man for all the world**

President Hinckley is not only a man for all seasons—but for all the world!

He has usually been our spokesman in meeting representatives of governments and major worldwide organizations who come to pay their respects and honor to the Church.

At a recent civic dinner honoring President Hinckley, the master of ceremonies said of him: "It is understandable that [members of the Church] worldwide always express their affection for you. All of us [here] hope the honor, tribute and love expressed this evening . . . from [those of] diverse churches and creeds will imbue you and yours with special fond memories to help comfort and inspire you for a lifetime" (Nick S. Vidalakakis, annual dinner of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 21 Feb. 1995).

The brief but inspired administration of President Howard W. Hunter has come to a close. He loved the Lord and His work—and we know that the Lord loved him. President Hunter taught us how to be more gentle, more kind, more caring, and more worthy in our pursuit to become more Christlike.

And we now begin a new era of Church administration under President Gordon B. Hinckley—beloved by all—our fifteenth President since the restoration of the Church in 1830.

In the prescribed manner we have accepted and sustained him. Through

him, as has been done through prophets of old, revelation will be made available to us to meet the challenges of a modern society and advance the mission of the Church throughout the world.

And these revelations will be made available as appropriate, as we have seen demonstrated here this day by the calling of Henry B. Eyring to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, to be an Apostle of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This work is true. It will move forward to carry out all the divine plans of our Heavenly Father. I bear you this witness on this sacred day in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which immediately follows, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the wonderful Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "We Ever Pray for Thee." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder David E. Sorensen offered the benediction.

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## **GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 165th Annual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 1, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes. Duane Huff directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. These services are being relayed by

closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

We acknowledge the approximately 1,990 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

We note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Hans B. Ringger, and Rulon G. Craven are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Marlin K. Jensen and Joseph C. Muren are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders F. Melvin Hammond and Cree-L Kofford are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at this morning's solemn assembly Elder Henry B. Eyring was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elders John B. Dickson, Jay E. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and W. Craig Zwick were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. And Elder Bruce D. Porter was called as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

We've had wonderful music during these conference sessions. This morning we had the Mormon Youth Chorus, who inspired us. This afternoon we had about three hundred Aaronic Priesthood boys. You wouldn't find anywhere in the world a better looking group of boys than those wonderful young men. They'll make a group of missionaries that'll turn the world around.

This evening we have a chorus furnished by combined institute groups from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes, under the direction of Brother Duane Huff, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ. I don't know how else you can bring har-

mony among Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake, and Orem except with something like this.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" following which Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy, who is serving as president of the Australia Sydney North Mission, will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!"

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy." Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

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The choir sang "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy."

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## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Days never to be forgotten

It is a privilege and a thrill to be with you tonight in this priesthood meeting, standing before such a remarkable audience. It is impossible for me to express adequately my gratitude for the priesthood we bear, especially in such moments of the Church's history as this general conference represents. In such days as these are, you and I see history firsthand, and with arm raised to the square we do in solemn assembly participate in the making of such history. As Oliver Cowdery once said of such restoration privileges, "These were days

never to be forgotten" (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote).

We miss President Howard W. Hunter at this conference, but we do find joy in knowing that he now sits with the noble and great ones of all eternity. And I with others in this conference bear personal witness, as a witness, of the divine calling of President Gordon B. Hinckley to this holy office and sacred assignment for which he has been so long and so well prepared. And by *preparation* we mean not only the many experiences which he has had in the Church from his youth, but also mean that doctrine Alma taught, that such a

man is "called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God," a calling predicated at least in part upon demonstrated "faith and good works" before President Hinckley ever came to this earth (see Alma 13:1-3).

I include in that testimony and expression of love my appreciation for the callings that have newly come to President Thomas S. Monson, President James E. Faust, and President Boyd K. Packer as well. I welcome to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Elder Henry B. Eyring. I look forward to being his seatmate and companion for many years to come.

### Guiding the rising generation

In this spirit of memorable moments in the ongoing destiny of the Church, I wish to speak rather directly to the young men gathered tonight, bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood. I wish to impress upon you some sense of history, something of what it has meant, something of what it may yet mean to belong to the true and living church of God and hold the significant offices in its priesthood that you now hold and will yet hold.

So much that we do in this church is directed toward you, those whom the Book of Mormon calls "the rising generation" (Mosiah 26:1; Alma 5:49). We who have already walked that portion of life's path that you are now on try to call back to you something of what we have learned. We shout encouragement. We try to warn of pitfalls or perils along the way. Where possible we try to walk with you and keep you close to our side.

Believe it or not, we too were young once, though I know that strains the very limits of your imagination. Equally unfathomable is the fact that your parents were once young also, and so were your bishops and your quorum advisers. But as the years have gone by we have learned many lessons beyond those of

youth—that, for example, Noah's wife was *not* named Joan of Arc, and, so far as we know, Pontius Pilate flew no commercial aircraft of any kind. Why do you think we now try so hard and worry so much and want the very best for you? It is because we have been your age and you have never been ours, and we have learned some things you do not yet know.

When you are young, not all of life's questions and difficulties have arisen yet, but they will arise, and unfortunately for your generation they will arise at a younger and younger age. The gospel of Jesus Christ marks the only sure and safe path. So older men, seasoned men—men passing on to you the legacy of history—continue to call out to youth.

### Youth, gain testimonies and be faithful

This call from one generation to another is one of the reasons we hold priesthood meetings with dads seated next to sons, and priesthood leaders at the side of those whose fathers may be absent. It was in a stake priesthood meeting with a format very much like this one that the then twelve-year-old Gordon B. Hinckley stood in the back of the old Salt Lake Tenth Ward building—his first such stake priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon—feeling just a bit lonely and a little out of place.

But upon hearing the men of that stake sing W. W. Phelps's stirring memorial tribute "Praise to the Man," this young boy, who would one day be a prophet himself, had it borne upon his soul that Joseph Smith *was indeed* a prophet of God, that he had in truth "communed with Jehovah," that "millions shall know 'Brother Joseph' again" (*Hymns*, no. 27). Yes, some part of the preparation for this morning's solemn assembly began when a twelve-year-old deacon heard faithful, experienced, older men sing the hymns of Zion in a priesthood meeting.



Now very few twelve-year-olds will live to become the President of the Church, nor do we need to in order to prove our faithfulness. But let us never forget that "in every place a man now stands, a boy once used to be," and all of you young men have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to be just as faithful in gaining a testimony and standing for the truth as did the men we have sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators down through the dispensations. Indeed this is one of those things history calls out to us—that the future may be daunting, but you young men are more than equal to the task.

### **Rudger Clawson proves faithful**

The name Rudger Clawson will, unfortunately, be unfamiliar to many of you. For forty-five years Brother Clawson was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and for twenty-two of those years served as the president of that quorum. But long before any of those responsibilities came to him, he had a chance to prove his faithfulness and demonstrate in his youth just how willing he was to defend his beliefs, even at the peril of his life.

As a young man Brother Clawson had been called on a mission to the southern states. At that time in America's history, well over one hundred years ago, malicious mobs were still in existence, outlaws who threatened the safety of members of the Church and others. Elder Clawson and his missionary companion, Elder Joseph Standing, were traveling on foot to a missionary conference when, nearing their destination, they were suddenly confronted by twelve armed and angry men on horseback.

With cocked rifles and revolvers shoved in their faces, the two elders were repeatedly struck and occasionally knocked to the ground as they were led away from their prescribed path and

forced to walk deep into the nearby woods. Elder Joseph Standing, knowing what might lie in store for them, made a bold move and seized a pistol within his reach. Instantly one of the assailants turned his gun on young Standing and fired. Another mobber, pointing to Elder Clawson, said, "Shoot that man." In response every weapon in the circle was turned on him.

It seemed to this young elder that his fate was to be the same as that of his fallen brother. He said: "I . . . at once realized there was no avenue of escape. My time had come. . . . My turn to follow Joseph Standing was at hand." He folded his arms, looked his assailants in the face, and said, "Shoot."

Whether stunned by this young elder's courage or now fearfully aware of what they had already done to his companion, we cannot know, but someone in that fateful moment shouted, "Don't shoot," and one by one the guns were lowered. Terribly shaken but driven by loyalty to his missionary companion, Elder Clawson continued to defy the mob. Never certain that he might not yet be shot, young Rudger, often working and walking with his back to the mob, was able to carry the body of his slain companion to a safe haven where he performed the last act of kindness for his fallen friend. There he gently washed the bloody stains from the missionary's body and prepared it for the long train ride home (in David S. Hoopes and Roy Hoopes, *The Making of a Mormon Apostle: The Story of Rudger Clawson* [New York: Madison Books, 1990], pp. 23–31).

I tell that story with some concern, hoping no one will dwell on the death of a young missionary or think gospel living brought only trials or tragedies in those early years. But I do share it for an ever younger and ever newer generation in the Church who may not know the gifts that earlier men and women—including young men and women—have

given us in what our new film states simply in another single word—*Legacy*.

### Tom Yates proves faithful

Fortunately we do not, for the most part, face any such physical threats now. No, for the most part our courage will be more quiet, less dramatic, but in every way as crucial and as demanding. May I use one example drawn from contemporary history, an example demonstrating faith and loyalty more like that which you and I will be called on to exhibit. In doing so I pay tribute to faithful fathers who serve as the standard of strength for their growing and less-experienced sons.

Some years ago, long after he had returned from his mission, Bishop J. Richard Yates, now of the Durham Third Ward in the Durham North Carolina Stake, was out on the family farm in Idaho, helping his father milk the cows and do some of the evening chores. Because of limited family circumstances, Richard's father, Tom Yates, had not been able to go on a mission in his youth. But that disappointment only strengthened Brother Yates's vow that what he had not been able to afford, his sons would certainly realize—a full-time mission for the Lord—whatever the sacrifice involved.

In those days in rural Idaho it was customary to give a young man a heifer calf as soon as he was old enough to take care of it. The idea was that the young man would raise the animal, keep some of the offspring, and sell others to help pay for the feed. Fathers wisely understood that this was a way to teach their sons responsibility as they earned money for their missions.

Young Richard did well with that gift of a first calf and, over time, expanded the herd to eight. Along the way he invested some of the income from the milk he sold to buy a litter of pigs. He had

nearly sixty of those when his call finally arrived. It was the family's plan that they would sell future litters of the pigs to supplement income from the sale of the dairy milk to cover the costs of Richard's missionary labors.

That evening out in the barn, long after a wonderful twenty-four months were safely concluded, this young man heard something of which he had known absolutely nothing while on his mission. His father said that sometime within the first month after Richard had left, the local veterinarian, a close family friend and tireless worker in that farming community, had come to vaccinate the pigs against a local threat of cholera. But in an unfortunate professional error, the vet gave the animals the live vaccine but failed to give adequate antiserum. The results were that the entire herd of pigs came down with the disease; within a few weeks most of the animals were dead, and the remaining few had to be destroyed.

With the pigs dead, obviously milk sales would not be enough to keep Richard on his mission, so his father planned to sell one by one the family's dairy herd to cover the costs. But beginning with the second month and virtually every month for twenty-three thereafter, as his parents prepared to send him the money for his mission, either one of their cows suddenly died or else one of his did. Thus the herd decreased at twice the rate they expected. It seemed an unbelievable stretch of misfortune.

During that difficult time a large note became due at the local bank. With all else that had happened and the inordinate financial problems they were facing, Brother Yates simply did not have the money to repay it. There was every likelihood they would now lose their entire farm. After much prayer and concern, but with never a word to their missionary son, Brother Yates went to face the president of the bank, a man not

of our faith who was perceived in the community to be somewhat stern and quite aloof.

After he had heard the explanation of this considerable misfortune, the banker sat for a moment, looking into the face of a man who, in his own quiet and humble way, was standing up to trouble and opposition and fear as faithfully as had Rudger Clawson and Joseph Standing. In that situation I suppose Brother Yates could not say much more to his banker than "Shoot."

Quietly the bank president leaned forward and asked just one question. "Tom," he said, "are you paying your tithing?" Not at all certain as to how the answer would be received, Brother Yates answered softly but without hesitation, "Yes, sir, I am." The banker then said, "You keep paying your tithing, and you keep your son on his mission. I'll take care of the note. I know you will repay me when you can."

No paperwork or signatures were exchanged. No threats or warnings were uttered. Two good and honorable men simply stood and shook hands. An agreement had been made, and that agreement was kept.

Bishop Yates says he remembers hearing this heretofore unknown story with considerable emotion that evening, asking his father—the note to the bank long since repaid—if all that worry and fear and sacrifice had been worth it just to try to live the gospel and keep a son on a mission. "Yes, Son," he said, "it was worth all of that and a lot more if the Lord ever asks it of me," and he continued with his evening chores.

Physically, Tom Yates was a slight man—under five feet eight inches tall

and weighing less than 150 pounds. His body was stunted somewhat from a near-fatal case of polio contracted in his infancy. But Richard says he does not ever remember thinking of his father's physical stature one way or the other. To this son he was simply a spiritual giant, always larger than life, leaving his children a legacy of devotion and courage longer than all eternity.

### **Our priesthood legacy**

To such fathers of our families and fathers of our faith, to those who have lived lives of integrity whatever the cost, to generations in this and every dispensation who've faced fear and trials and, yes, death unflinchingly, I express gratitude from the bottom of my heart. I commend you young men for what must be your determination to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. I shoulder with you the responsibility placed on each one of us who bears the priesthood of God. I plead for each of us to remember that in the work of the Lord we must often turn our cheek but we must never turn our coat. I pledge with you my own determination to be true and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose church this is, even as I praise with you that legacy of loyalty given to us by those who have gone before, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.

Elder Monte J. Brough of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Helvécio Martins of the Seventy.

## Elder Monte J. Brough

### Search for identity

Have you ever had the experience, as you left your home for a youth activity, to hear your mother say, "Now, Son, remember who you are"? Did you wonder each time, Why does she always say that? And by the way, who am I?

Others have also asked this very important question:

"Moses said unto God, Who am I?"<sup>1</sup>

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God?"<sup>2</sup>

Among the magnificent and abundant teachings of President Howard W. Hunter is this assertion: "The greatest search of our time is the search for personal identity and for human dignity."<sup>3</sup> This search for personal identity is essentially a search for role models that can become instructive in the conduct of our lifestyles. With only a few exceptions, a young person cannot find adequate role models among those in athletics, entertainment, or commercial music. Not only do these public figures fail to provide positive examples, but they are often the exact inverse of the type of role models that are acceptable to most of us. Access to these contemporary icons is expensive and unproductive. We are almost always disappointed when we come to witness the shallow and murky standards by which the public heaps its praise. No wonder the public areas of so many cities and towns are crowded with young people who are possessed with these same shallow and murky standards of personal behavior.

### Family role models

Yet there is an abundance of role models who can be found much closer and who can have much deeper influence on each one of us. Most of us, with relatively little effort and much less cost,

can provide for our families a veritable list of important role models. This list can be created from a modest search into the lives of our ancestors. Let me give you a few examples:

A few years ago, as a birthday gift, I went to the FamilySearch® system and retrieved my wife's entire recorded family pedigree. That was a serious mistake. The computer revealed that my wife is a descendant of European royalty. It has been hard to live with her ever since. Maybe now, through this knowledge of her family history, I am more inclined to treat her as our family queen. But the biggest problem, of course, is that my children share in this royal ancestry, which, sadly, makes me the only "commoner" in my family.

### Manasseh Byrd Kearl

Manasseh Byrd Kearl, born in 1870 and raised near Bear Lake in northern Utah, tells a wonderful story that might be instructional to his descendants, of whom I am one. Let me read from his journal:

"That fall father bought some cattle for John Dickens, a very large herd. Dickens had a large ranch on Bear River. . . . I remember Jimmie was down north buying cattle and he sent father that he needed more money. So father toled me to take some money to him. Mother sewed six hundred dollars in my under clothes, and father put me on a horse and said, 'Now Byrdie my boy, don't you get off this horse till you find your brother Jimmie, and keep your mouth shut, and if any one asks you questions don't reply or tell them where you are going, and do not give this money to any one but Jimmie, no matter what any one tells you.' Well, when I got to Dingle-Dell, I was toled Jimmie was in Montpelier. So to Montpelier I went to Joe Richs, a friend of father's, he toled me

that Jimmie had gone home. Brother Rich wanted me to go in the house and get something to eat. I toled him no, that father toled me not to get off this horse till I found Jim, and here I stayed. I turned around and headed for home. When I got to Bears Valley, . . . I could hardly walk. Mr. Potter tried to get me to stop and rest, but I could not stay. At last I got home. Jimmie took me off the horse and carried me into the house. Mother cried to think I had been in the saddle while the horse went over eighty miles."<sup>4</sup>

### **Gustave Henriod**

Let us consider also the eloquent language of Gustave Henriod:

"You, my kind reader, will never know the sports and vicissitudes, joys and fears, gladness and disappointment, grief and delight, cravings and satisfactions, hope and despair, anxiety and contentment, pains and pleasures, all of which are familiar associates, or rather were in the year 1853 between Omaha and Salt Lake City. Yoking up half wild oxen every morning, staking down the tent every night, picking up buffalo chips to cook the food, loading and unloading boxes and bedding mornings and evenings, in the saddle or on foot guarding the stock every night and driving loose cattle in the day, digging trenches around the tents to keep from being drowned by the torrents, singing the songs of Zion, mending a broken wagon, . . . washing your clothes—everybody forgot a clothes line."<sup>5</sup>

### **Hannah Cornaby**

Another important quality to emulate is humor in the face of challenge. Hannah Cornaby, another member of the 1853 migration, wrote:

"It was three years, to a day, from that memorable first of June . . . , when our oxen having arrived, we left Keokuk.

I wish I could afford a page to a description of our starting. The oxen were wild, and getting them yoked was the most laughable sight I had ever witnessed; everybody giving orders, and nobody knowing how to carry them out. If the men had not been saints, there would doubtless have been much profane language used; but the oxen, not understanding 'English,' did just as well without it. But it did seem so truly comical to witness the bewildered look of some innocent brother, who, after having labored an hour or more to get [an ox] secured to one end of the yoke, would hold the other end aloft, trying to persuade [the other ox] to come under, only to see [the first] careering across the country, the yoke lashing the air, and he not even giving a hint as to when he intended to stop."<sup>6</sup>

### **John Davies**

Of course there were political and social conflicts in the lives of some of our ancestors, but even these become instructional in the ways they dealt with their circumstances. John Davies was a loyalist during the American Revolutionary War. He had been instrumental in the establishment of the Church of England in America, which became known as the First Episcopal Society of Litchfield. These early immigrants had been taught that next to religion, loyalty was the cardinal virtue. They honestly considered that none but the infidel and traitor would venture to speak of revolution from the motherland. Some argued that any attempt to independence was rank ingratitude. They considered the king to be the head not only of their state but also of their religion.

John Davies recounts the challenge of building the first church in Litchfield, Connecticut, only to have it seriously damaged by soldiers of the Revolution. His cattle were run off by revolutionists and much of his property severely damaged because of significant persecution

of those who had remained loyal to the king. Listen to this about John Davies:

"After the close of the war a man who had taken an active part in driving off a number of cattle from his farm, and had committed other acts of plunder, having become destitute, applied for relief in his extremity to Mr. Davies, who not only pardoned him for the wrongs he had done, but liberally relieved his wants."<sup>7</sup>

### **Tamma Miner**

Tamma Miner's first husband, Albert, died in January of 1848 when their youngest child was not yet two years old and their oldest only fifteen years of age. Tamma's father, Edmond, was murdered by a mob at Nauvoo, Illinois, when Tamma was thirty-two and expecting her ninth child. Her daughter Melissa died during the persecution era at seven months; her son Orson died of a fever at seventeen; and another daughter, Sylvia, died at age two. Tamma, with her five remaining boys and two girls, started the journey to Salt Lake City across the Plains on June 10, 1850. Tamma's writings include this wonderful declaration:

"I have passed through all the hardships and drivings and burnings and mobbings and threatenings and have been with the Saints in all their persecutions from Huron county to Kirtland and from Kirtland to Missouri back to Illinois and then across the desert. I write this that my children may have a little idea of what their parents passed through. I hope my children will appreciate these lines for I do feel highly honored to be numbered with the Latter-day Saints."<sup>8</sup>

These are a few great examples of role models which are available to all of us as we learn of our own family history.

### **Genealogy helps us know our identity**

Recently we met with an executive of a large entertainment corporation.

Among her many fine credentials, this corporate leader is of Jewish ethnicity. She obviously enjoyed a tour of our Family History Library and a demonstration of the Church's commitment to the gathering and preserving of vital records from all over the world. As our meeting ended, she asked me a question: "Why is your church so interested in genealogy?"

I responded, "Let me answer you by asking you the same question: Why are Jews interested in their genealogy?"

She answered, a little surprised by my query: "Why? It is of ultimate and profound importance. It is how we obtain and maintain our identity. It is how I know who I am. The history and lives of our ancestors are the glue that holds the entire Jewish community together." She concluded, "How else would you know who you are?"

I responded to her, "That is also one of the reasons why our church is interested in genealogy."

### **We are sons and heirs of God**

My brethren of the priesthood, how do we now answer this centuries-old question: Who am I?

First of all, we are sons of God created in His image. We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our connection and identification with the Church has been maintained by many of our members for more than a century and a half. Without question, the environment of our homes and families is the single greatest influence on our identity as individuals. This was true of our parents' families and their parents' families before them. We need not look beyond our own family to find wonderful role models whose high standards are more than adequate in our search for our own personal identity. As Elder Russell M. Nelson taught us this afternoon, we are children of the covenant.

For our own families comes this magnificent promise:

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

"For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."<sup>9</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Exodus 3:11.
2. 2 Samuel 7:18.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, p. 115; or *Improvement Era*, June 1967, p. 101.
4. Personal journal of Manasseh Byrd Kearl, copy in possession of author.
5. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958-77), 11:320.
6. *Autobiography and Poems* (Salt Lake City, J. C. Graham and Co., 1881), p. 32.
7. In Henry Eugene Davies, *Davies Memoir*, (n.p., 1895), pp. 21-22.
8. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 2:323.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 86:8-10.

## Elder Helvécio Martins

### The revelation on priesthood

June 8, 1978, is no doubt an unforgettable day. On this day priesthood and temple blessings were extended to all worthy male members of the Church. Memorable indeed, its impact affected the lives of uncountable multitudes—of millions who had full knowledge of its meaning and of many others who have not yet arrived, perhaps, to the knowledge of the full extension of its effects.

On that date the First Presidency announced to the whole world a new and special revelation of the Lord, which was preceded by many prayers and much supplication for his divine direction.

What great changes that revelation promoted in the lives of so many children of our Father in Heaven, and among them my humble family in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It seemed unbelievable. It was an unexpected event, never before dreamed of by those whom the Father in his perfect wisdom preserved until this day when they would be best prepared to respond to the serious requirements of this

truly honorable stewardship, which is the priesthood.

### Home teacher—no greater calling

In spite of the relative knowledge acquired throughout the six years of membership in the true church, my first calling as a priesthood holder was not to serve as a General Authority, or a mission president, or a bishop, or a member of two stake presidencies. It was not to serve as an executive secretary in the stake and in the ward. My first assignment and calling was that of serving as a home teacher. This calling preceded all the others. It is interestingly significant to think of it.

Since then I have considered this to be a most important and wonderful calling. In previous callings I have always been released, but this first stewardship has been kept untouched.

"There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher," taught President Ezra Taft Benson. "There is no greater Church service rendered to our Father in Heaven's children than the ser-

vice rendered by a humble, dedicated, committed home teacher" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 61; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 50).

### Home teachers feed the Lord's sheep

After his resurrection and before ascending to heaven, Jesus asked Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my [sheep]" (John 21:15). The question was repeated two more times, and Peter answered in the same manner; and the Lord replied, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

This is the work or the stewardship of the home teacher: to feed, to nourish and quench the thirst of the sheep who are assigned to him as a shepherd.

Nothing has been represented to have higher priority or more urgency in my ecclesiastical life, followed by the lives of my children, than the dedicated, loyal, and devoted fulfillment of this stewardship.

It is worth noting the way the Lord prepares our spirit and mind, without our realizing it, to obtain this high level of understanding.

### Our first home teachers

When we were still visiting the Church as investigators, in the second week we received a phone call from the branch president, Brother Antonio Landelino Barros, who asked if it were possible for him to come visit us the following night. At the assigned hour President Barros arrived, accompanied by two men, all formally dressed. Before the family gathered in the living room, President Barros asked permission to offer a prayer. His words were a simple but inspiring supplication to the Lord, asking for the guidance of his Spirit and for special blessings on the family for

us to understand the purpose of that visit and to benefit from it thereafter.

Briefly, President Barros presented a discussion on the home teaching program and introduced his companions, Brothers Nelson Bezerra dos Santos and Alfredo Orlando Torres Lima, as our home teachers and from then on our first and most direct contact with the Church.

What a great experience! What a great opportunity and privilege to serve! Those brothers were around our family during the whole time we lived in the branch area.

President Marion G. Romney taught that the home teachers "carry the heavy and glorious responsibility of representing the Lord Jesus Christ in looking after the welfare of each member" ("The Responsibilities of Home Teachers," *Ensign*, Mar. 1973, pp. 12-13).

Every Sunday those brothers received our family when we arrived at the chapel. They sat next to us during meetings. They taught us the hymns. They taught us about the standards of the kingdom. They called to inform us about the passing away of President Joseph Fielding Smith and later about the calling of the new prophet, President Harold B. Lee.

They were interested in the well-being and the progress of our family and our eventual needs. After our baptism, postponed for two months, and even after we had moved to the Tijuca Ward, these dedicated home teachers and President Barros took turns during the following three months, approximately, in regular phone calls to know if our family was well adjusted in the new ward, if everything was all right, if any help was needed.

In spite of the change of residence, the home teachers did not feel totally released of their duties of taking care of and giving attention to our family.



Even being sure we had new shepherds, they continued as our brothers in Christ.

What a magnificent attitude! They no longer had the assignment, but they kept the Christian interest. What an extraordinary bond was established. Almost twenty-three years have passed since then. Many other home teacher companions have succeeded those first ones. Their names, with few exceptions, are vaguely remembered, but the names and images of those first servants are forever in our memories since they served as true shepherds.

"The most worthy calling in life . . . is that in which man can serve best his fellow man," taught President David O. McKay ("The Noblest Calling in Life," *Instructor*, Mar. 1961, pp. 73-74).

### **Guardians of the flock**

Those brothers were, in fact, guardians, keepers, and very supportive. It is also worth mentioning that they fulfilled their stewardship with happy countenances, which reflected a happy state of spirit.

It seemed as if it were an honor and a privilege for them to serve so. They seemed to understand the duties of the eldest and youngest alike, as taught by the Apostle Peter:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2).

The example of those dedicated brothers served as the foundation for the future conduct of a new priesthood holder. As I recall these experiences, myself being a home teacher now, I have a pattern very close to the model of Jesus Christ to follow.

Ever since then I have devoted myself with all my might, with my best efforts, to the care of assigned families, and

some of my most significant experiences as a priesthood holder have been as a home teacher.

### **Watchmen on the tower**

During the regional representatives' seminar held on April 3, 1969, President Harold B. Lee taught that "priesthood visitors are to be watchmen on the tower" (p. 78; transcript on microfilm in LDS Church Archives).

The Lord desires to gather "his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (D&C 29:2); and the home teachers, and by extension the visiting teachers, have a role of high relevance for the fulfilling of the desire of the Lord.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "[Home teaching is] a program so vital that, if faithfully followed, it will help to spiritually renew the Church and exalt its individual members and families" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 59; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 48).

I pray that as priesthood holders we may develop a more perfect understanding of this sacred stewardship.

God lives, as does his Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. The Lord speaks today through his prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, whom we love and follow.

I bear this testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Brother Monte J. Brough and Elder Helvécio Martins.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." President James E. Faust will then address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

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## President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, it is very humbling to feel the great strength gathered here and in the many buildings across the world. As we gather tonight, we praise the name of President Howard W. Hunter for his life and his ministry and for all that we have learned from him. God bless his memory.

Brethren, I confess to you that I am not very comfortable in the calling I have received. I earnestly desire, with all humility, your faith and prayers. If I did not have the absolute conviction that "a man must be called of God"<sup>1</sup> to any office in the Church, I could not serve for one hour in this calling. I express my profound appreciation to President Gordon B. Hinckley for the honor and the trust he has shown to me in calling me to be his second counselor. He has my total loyalty and support.

As I expressed in the press conference on Monday, March 13, 1995, I have had the great privilege of associating in various Church assignments with President Gordon B. Hinckley for forty years. I know his heart. I know his soul. I know of his faith. I know of his dedication. I know of his great capacity. I know of his love of the Lord and God's holy work. I have a great personal affection and regard for him. I also know that he has been foreordained and marvelously prepared to be the President of this church in our day and time.

My association with President Thomas S. Monson has also been long and blessed. We have worked closely together for decades in several capacities. His mind and memory are unique, his faith simple and absolute. President Monson is a big man, but the biggest part of him is his great heart. He has tremendous talent. I feel very humbled to serve with President Hinckley and President Monson. I have profound respect and

admiration for President Packer, each member of the Twelve, and all of the General Authorities. And I welcome Brother Eyring into the choice fellowship of the sacred apostleship.

### The Lord's shepherds

Tonight I would like to speak to the priesthood of God in their capacity as the Lord's shepherds. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated: "Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he is responsible for the spiritual or temporal well-being of any of the Lord's children is a shepherd to those sheep. The Lord holds his shepherds accountable for the safety [meaning the salvation] of his sheep."<sup>2</sup> The bearers of the priesthood have this great responsibility, whether it is father, grandfather, home teacher, elders quorum president, bishop, stake president, or other Church calling.

Initially I speak to the worthy young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was a very small boy, my father found a lamb all alone out in the desert. The herd of sheep to which its mother belonged had moved on, and somehow the lamb got separated from its mother, and the shepherd must not have known that it was lost. Because it could not survive alone in the desert, my father picked it up and brought it home. To have left the lamb there would have meant certain death, either by falling prey to the coyotes or by starvation because it was so young that it still needed milk. Some shepherds call these lambs "bummers." My father gave the lamb to me, and I became its shepherd.

For several weeks I warmed cow's milk in a baby's bottle and fed the lamb. We became fast friends. I called him Nigh—why, I don't remember. It began to grow. My lamb and I would play on the lawn. Sometimes we would lie together on the grass and I would lay my

head on its soft, woolly side and look up at the blue sky and the white billowing clouds. I did not lock my lamb up during the day. It would not run away. It soon learned to eat grass. I could call my lamb from anywhere in the yard by just imitating as best I could the bleating sound of a sheep: *Baa. Baa.*

One night there came a terrible storm. I forgot to put my lamb in the barn that night as I should have done. I went to bed. My little friend was frightened in the storm, and I could hear it bleating. I knew that I should help my pet, but I wanted to stay safe, warm, and dry in my bed. I didn't get up as I should have done. The next morning I went out to find my lamb dead. A dog had also heard its bleating cry and killed it. My heart was broken. I had not been a good shepherd or steward of that which my father had entrusted to me. My father said, "Son, couldn't I trust you to take care of just one lamb?" My father's remark hurt me more than losing my woolly friend. I resolved that day, as a little boy, that I would try never again to neglect my stewardship as a shepherd if I were ever placed in that position again.

Not too many years thereafter I was called as a junior companion to a home teacher. There were times when it was so cold or stormy and I wanted to stay home and be comfortable, but in my mind's ear I could hear my little lamb bleating, and I knew I needed to be a good shepherd and go with my senior companion. In all those many years, whenever I have had a desire to shirk my duties, there would come to me a remembrance of how sorry I was that night so many years ago when I had not been a good shepherd. I have not always done everything I should have, but I have tried.

### **Duties of husbands and fathers**

I should like to speak for a few minutes about the constitutional duties of

the Lord's shepherds. By that I mean those responsibilities which are contained in the revelations given by the Lord himself. There is no greater responsibility than that of being a husband and a father, from which there is no release. The Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else."<sup>3</sup> The Lord further says to the fathers of this church, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."<sup>4</sup>

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

"And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy."<sup>5</sup>

### **Duties of home teachers**

Another great responsibility is that of the home teacher:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking."<sup>6</sup>

A further commandment is to "see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."<sup>7</sup> They are to "warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ."<sup>8</sup>

### **Duties of local priesthood leaders**

The priesthood quorum presidents and their counselors are also shepherds of the sheepfold and bear the responsibility to lovingly care for the members of their quorums. The bishops of the Church are some of the watchmen on the tower. Said Paul to Timothy regarding the bishops of the Church:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"<sup>9</sup>

Of the Aaronic Priesthood the Lord has said, "The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same."<sup>10</sup> Bishops, our young men are experiencing the storms of life. There are vicious wolves prowling to devour them. Many of them are like my little lamb, crying out for help. We plead with you bishops to do all you can to keep them safe.

The stake president is also a constitutional officer of the Church, for he presides over the stake, which the Lord has said "may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth."<sup>11</sup> The stakes are "the curtains or the strength of Zion."<sup>12</sup> They are to be spiritual centers of righteousness, strength, and protection.

### **Duties of the Presiding Bishopric**

The Presiding Bishopric, each of whom is an ordained bishop, have the responsibility for directing the temporal affairs of the Church as assigned by the First Presidency. In this great worldwide Church the responsibility of the Presiding Bishopric is heavy and great.

### **Duties of the Seventy**

The Lord said of the Seventy:

"The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—

thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. . . .

"The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews."<sup>13</sup>

### **Duties of the Twelve**

The Twelve Apostles are the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling."<sup>14</sup> The Lord said they are "being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> The Twelve are the legates of the Lord.

### **Duties of the First Presidency**

The First Presidency have the ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the kingdom of God on the earth. Of them the Lord has said:

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church. . . .

"And the Presidency of the council of the High Priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the High Priesthood and its counselors shall have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church."<sup>16</sup>

### **Duties of the President of the Church**

Of the President of the Church, the Lord has said that he is the "President of the High Priesthood of the Church; or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the

Church.”<sup>17</sup> He is “to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses . . . , to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.”<sup>18</sup>

The President of the Church directs the use of all of the keys and authority of the priesthood and is the only person who can exercise all of them, even though all of the ordained Apostles hold these keys, some of which are in latent form.

Brethren, I have been a member of the First Presidency for only a few days. It seems as though before I had this calling I had limited vision, but I have now put on glasses that allow me to see more clearly, in a small way, the magnitude of the responsibility of the President of the Church. I am afraid I am like the aristocrat who wore a monocle in one eye. Of him it was said, “He could see more than he could comprehend.” The men who see most clearly the big picture are these giants of the Lord, President Hinckley and President Monson, who have served many years faithfully as counselors to the previous Presidents of the Church.

### Let us be united

Now brethren, in conclusion, in a church as vast and far-reaching as ours, there must be order. We must have, in addition to the scriptures and modern revelations, guidelines and procedures for the Church to move forward around the world in an orderly manner. There are some elements of bureaucracy which cannot help but occasionally produce some irritation and perhaps frustration. We ask you to look beyond any irritations or inconvenience in Church administration. We ask you to focus and concentrate on the simple, sublime, spiritually nourishing, and saving principles of the gospel. We ask you to stand steady. We ask you to be faithful in your stewardships as the shepherding priesthood

authority of the Church. Let us be true to our callings and the holy priesthood we bear. Let us be united in supporting and sustaining those in authority over us.

### “Feed my sheep”

Brethren, after more than sixty years I can still hear in my mind the bleating, frightened cry of the lamb of my boyhood that I did not shepherd as I should have. I can also remember the loving rebuke of my father: “Son, couldn’t I trust you to take care of just one lamb?” If we are not good shepherds, I wonder how we will feel in the eternities.

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”<sup>19</sup>

That we may do so, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:5.
2. *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 710.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28–29.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–54.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:55.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
9. 1 Timothy 3:1–5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 107:15.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 101:21.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 107:25, 34.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 107:35.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 107:22, 79.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 107:65–66.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 107:91–92; see also 21:1.
19. John 21:15–17.

### President Hinckley

We have just listened to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor.

## President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is gratifying to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world, holders of the priesthood of God are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Your nationalities vary and your languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

With moist eyes and tender hearts we have said farewell to that gentle giant of a man, even a prophet of God, President Howard W. Hunter. We have sustained this day President Gordon B. Hinckley as the President of the Church and the prophet, seer, and revelator of God. I know that President Hinckley has been called of our Heavenly Father as the prophet and that he will lead us along those pathways the Savior has outlined. The work will go forward, and the people will be blessed. It is an honor and distinct privilege to serve with President Gordon B. Hinckley and with President James E. Faust in the First Presidency of the Church.

### **"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations"**

Long years ago a divine command was given by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as He said to His beloved eleven disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup> Mark records that "they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them."<sup>2</sup>

This sacred charge has not been rescinded. Rather, it has been reemphasized. The Prophet Joseph Smith set forth the purpose of the Church when he declared, "It is the bringing of men and women to a knowledge of the eternal truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world, and that only through belief in Him, and faith which manifests itself in good works, can men and nations enjoy peace."

Does the world in which we live stand in need of the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Almost everywhere one looks there appears an erosion not only of the environment but, even more seriously, an erosion of spirituality and of compliance with eternal commandments. One sees a blatant disregard for the precious souls of mankind.

It is almost as though the faces of many have been turned away from Him—even the Lord—who solemnly declared, "The worth of souls is great in the sight of God."<sup>3</sup> The gentle words "Come, follow me"<sup>4</sup> fall on many with stopped

ears and closed hearts. Such seem to be attuned to another voice.

### Participate in priesthood service

Do you, with me, remember the story from childhood days of that persuasive musician, the Pied Piper of Hamelin? You will recall that he entered Hamelin and offered, for a specified sum of money, to rid the town of the vermin with which it was plagued. When the contract was agreed upon, he played his pipe and the rats came swarming from the buildings and followed him to the river, where they drowned. When the town leaders refused to pay him for his services, he returned to play his pipe and led the precious children away from the safety of their families and their homes, never to return.

Are there Pied Pipers even today? Are they playing alluring music to lead, to their own destruction, those who listen and follow? These “pipers” pipe the tunes of *pride* and *pleasure*, of *selfishness* and *greed* and leave in their wake confused minds, troubled hearts, empty lives, and destroyed dreams.

The deep yearning of countless numbers is expressed in the plea of one who spoke to Philip of old: “How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?”<sup>5</sup>

Brethren of the priesthood, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The harvest truly is great. Let there be no mistake about it; the missionary opportunity of a lifetime is yours. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.

To those of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, I say, *prepare for your full-time missions*. You will become a part of that valiant missionary army of the Lord which now numbers 50,000 strong.

How might you best respond? May I suggest a formula that will ensure your success as missionaries:

1. Prepare with purpose;
2. Teach with testimony;
3. Labor with love.

### Prepare with purpose

First, prepare with purpose. Remember the qualifying statement of the Master: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”<sup>6</sup> Missionary work is difficult. It taxes one’s energies; it strains one’s capacity; it demands one’s best effort—frequently a second effort. No other labor requires longer hours or greater devotion or such sacrifice and fervent prayer.

President John Taylor summed up the requirements: “The kind of men we want as bearers of this Gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom the people who know them have faith and in whom God has confidence. . . . We want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God. . . . Men who bear the words of life among the nations, ought to be men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity; and this being the command of God to us, we shall try and carry it out.”<sup>7</sup>

### Teach with testimony

Second, teach with testimony. Peter and John, those converted fishermen who became Apostles, were warned not to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Their answer was firm: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”<sup>8</sup>

Paul the Apostle, that sterling testifier of truth, was speaking to all of us—members and missionaries alike—when he counseled his beloved friend Timothy,

"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>9</sup>

Elder Delbert L. Stapley, who served as a member of the Council of the Twelve a number of years ago, quoted Paul in his epistle to the Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation."<sup>10</sup> Then Elder Stapley added: "If we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, then we should not be ashamed to live it. And if we are not ashamed to live it, then we should not be ashamed to share it."

### Labor with love

Third, labor with love. There is no substitute for love. Often this love is kindled in youth by a mother, expanded by a father, and kept vibrant through service to God. Remember the Lord's counsel: "And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work."<sup>11</sup>

Well might each of us ask himself: *Today have I increased in faith, in hope, in charity, in love?* When our lives comply with God's standard and we labor with love to bring souls unto Him, those within our sphere of influence will never speak the lament, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."<sup>12</sup>

### Meeting missionaries in a clothing store

Young missionaries always have an idea as to where they would *love* to serve. Usually it's a faraway place with a strange-sounding name.

One day I was in the men's suit department of a large store when I encountered two missionaries with their mothers. It isn't difficult to spot missionaries or their mothers. The two elders were conversing, and one said to the other, "Where are you going on your mission?"

Came the reply, "I'm going to Austria."

The first missionary responded, "You lucky dog, going to Austria! Those beautiful Austrian Alps, that wonderful music, those delightful people! I wish I were going there."

"Where are you going?" said the missionary assigned to Austria.

"California," came the answer. "You know, less than two hours away by plane. We go there every year for a vacation."

I could see by the expression on the mothers' faces and the near tears of one of the missionaries that it was time for me to intervene. "Did you say California?" I asked. "Why, I once supervised that area. You have an inspired call, Elder. Do you realize what you will have in California to help you? You'll have chapels and stake centers that dot the land, and they'll be filled with Latter-day Saints who can be inspired to be fellow missionaries with you in sharing the gospel. You are a very fortunate missionary to be going there." I glanced at the other mother, who said, "Brother Monson, say something about Austria, quick!" I did so.

Young men, wherever you are called will be right for you, and you will learn to love your mission.

### All can participate in missionary work

Brethren, all of us can participate, as may our wives and children, in bringing souls to Christ through cooperative effort with the stake and full-time missionaries. One highly successful and rewarding way is through the conducting of open house events in our buildings. You bishops of wards and presidents of stakes have had a video presentation provided you, featuring Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. It is an excellent tool to be used in a missionary open house. Use it. The membership of the Church will grow and the Spirit of the Lord will be among us as we do so.

Prepare with purpose. Teach with testimony. Labor with love. I testify to



the truth of this formula and, indeed, this divine work of the Lord.

### Conversion of Yvonne Ramirez

Many years ago I boarded a plane in San Francisco en route to Los Angeles. As I sat down, the seat next to mine was empty. Soon, however, there occupied that seat a most lovely young lady. As the plane became airborne, I noticed that she was reading a book. As one is wont to do, I glanced at the title: *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. I mustered up my courage and said to her, "Excuse me. You must be a Mormon."

She replied, "Oh, no. Why do you ask?"

I said, "Well, you're reading a book written by LeGrand Richards, a very prominent leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

She responded, "Is that right? A friend gave this book to me, but I don't know much about it. However, it has aroused my curiosity."

I wondered silently, *Should I be forward and say more about the Church?* The words of the Apostle Peter crossed my mind: "Be ready always to give an answer to every [one] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>13</sup> I decided that now was the time for me to share my testimony with her. I told her that it had been my privilege years before to assist Elder Richards in printing that book. I mentioned the great missionary spirit of this man and told her of the many thousands of people who had embraced the truth after reading that which he had prepared. Then it was my privilege, during the remainder of the flight, to answer her questions relative to the Church—intelligent questions which came from the heart, which I perceived was a heart seeking truth. I asked if I might have an opportunity to have the missionaries call upon her. I asked if she would like to attend one

of our wards in San Francisco, where she lived. Her answers were affirmative. She gave me her name—Yvonne Ramirez—and indicated that she was a flight attendant on her way to an assignment.

Upon returning home I wrote to the mission president and the stake president, advising them of my conversation and that I had written to her and sent along some suggested reading. Incidentally, young men, I recommended that rather than sending two elders to this pretty off-duty flight attendant and her pretty roommate, two lady missionaries be assigned to call.

Several months passed by. Then I received a telephone call from the stake president, who asked, "Brother Monson, do you remember sitting next to a flight attendant on a trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles earlier this fall?" I answered affirmatively. He continued, "I thought you would like to know that Yvonne Ramirez has just become the most recently baptized and confirmed member of the Church. She would like to speak with you."

A sweet voice came on the line: "Brother Monson, thank you for sharing with me your testimony. I am the happiest person in all the world."

As tears filled my eyes and gratitude to God enlarged my soul, I thanked her and commended her on her search for truth and, having found it, her decision to enter those waters which cleanse and purify and provide entrance to eternal life.

I sat silently for a few minutes after replacing the telephone receiver. The words of our Savior coursed through my mind: "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>14</sup>

Such is the promise to all of us when we pursue our missionary opportunities

and follow the counsel and obey the commandments of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and our King. He lives. I so testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19-20.
2. Mark 16:20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
4. Luke 18:22.
5. Acts 8:31.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
7. In *Journal of Discourses*, 21:375.
8. Acts 4:19-20.
9. 1 Timothy 4:12.
10. Romans 1:16.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
12. Jeremiah 8:20.
13. 1 Peter 3:15.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.

#### President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson, for your inspiring words.

We remind you brethren that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which follows, must be in their seats by 9:15 A.M. daylight saving time. Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you—in fact we admonish you—to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening, or you'll enjoy only the second half of the conference in the morning.

We express appreciation to the combined institute men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes for the beautiful music this evening.

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" I wonder who organized this program to think I was going to stir up conflict! The benediction will then be offered by Elder F. David Stanley of the Seventy.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

#### Gratitude for sustaining vote

Thank you, brethren, for the effort you have made to come to this great worldwide priesthood meeting. Wherever you may be, we thank you and commend you for your faith, for your loyalty to this the work of the Lord, for the efforts you make in your daily living to be worthy of the sacred priesthood which you bear.

This morning we all participated in a solemn assembly. That is just what the name indicates. It is a gathering of the membership where every individual stands equal with every other in exercising with soberness and in solemnity his or her right to sustain or not to sustain

those who, under the procedures that arise out of the revelations, have been chosen to lead.

The procedure of sustaining is much more than a ritualistic raising of the hand. It is a commitment to uphold, to support, to assist those who have been selected.

Concerning the First Presidency the Lord has said, "Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church" (D&C 107:22).

I emphasize those words "upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church."

Your uplifted hands in the solemn assembly this morning became an expression of your willingness and desire to uphold us, your brethren and your servants, with your confidence, faith, and prayer. I am deeply grateful for that expression. I thank you, each of you. I assure you, as you already know, that in the processes of the Lord there is no aspiring for office. As the Lord said to his disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). This office is not one to be sought after. The right to select rests with the Lord. He is the master of life and death. His is the power to call. His is the power to take away. His is the power to retain. It is all in His hands.

I do not know why in His grand scheme one such as I would find a place. But having this mantle come upon me, I now rededicate whatever I have of strength or time or talent or life to the work of my Master in the service of my brethren and sisters. Again I thank you, my beloved brethren, for your actions this day. The burden of my prayer is that I will be worthy. I hope that I may be remembered in your prayers.

### **Releasing of regional representatives**

Now in the ongoing of this work, administrative changes sometimes occur. The doctrine remains constant. But from time to time there are organizational and administrative changes made under provisions set forth in the revelations.

For instance, twenty-eight years ago the First Presidency was inspired to call men to serve as regional representatives of the Twelve. At the time that was a new calling in the Church. The Presidency stated that this was necessary because of "the ever-increasing growth of the Church," which made "evident a greater need to train our stake and ward leaders in the programs of the Church that they

in turn might train the membership in their responsibilities before the Lord."

At that time there were 69 regional representatives. Today there are 284. The organization has become somewhat unwieldy.

More recently the Presidency were inspired to call men from the Seventy to serve in Area Presidencies. As the work grows across the world, it has become necessary to decentralize administrative authority to keep General Authorities closer to the people. We now have such Area Presidencies well established and effectively functioning.

It is now felt desirable to tighten up the organization administered by the Area Presidencies. Accordingly, we announce the release—the honorable release—of all regional representatives effective August 15 of this year. To these devoted and able brethren we express our deep appreciation for the tremendous work you have accomplished, for your loyalty, faithfulness, and devotion in advancing the cause of our Father in Heaven. I cannot say enough of good concerning these men. They have sacrificed their time and their resources. They have gone wherever they have been asked to go, whenever they have been asked to go. They have greatly assisted stake presidents and bishops with wise counsel and direction, with skillful training and instruction. We thank them one and all and pray that through the years to come the Lord will bless them with the satisfying assurance that each of them made a significant contribution to the work and that their labors have been accepted by Him.

### **The new office of area authority**

Now we announce the call of a new local officer to be known as an area authority. These will be high priests chosen from among past and present experienced Church leaders. They will con-

tinue with their current employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. The term of their call will be flexible, generally for a period of approximately six years. They will be closely tied to the Area Presidencies. They will be fewer in number than have been the regional representatives. We are guided in setting up this new corps of area officers, as were our Brethren before us in the calling of regional representatives, by the provision contained in the revelation on priesthood, section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants. After directions to the Twelve and the Seventy, the revelation states:

"Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church" (v. 98).

Now, I repeat that these changes will not be effective until August 15 of this year.

### **Growth of the Church**

Now, brethren, a few words on a related matter. The Church is becoming a very large and complex organization. We now have members in more than 150 nations. There are nine million of us, and we are growing at the approximate rate of a million each three and a half years. In addition to such regular programs as sacrament meeting, home teaching, and meetings of the priesthood quorums and auxiliaries, all of which are designed to meet the needs of the living membership of the Church, we are carrying forward an enormous program involving such undertakings as the world's largest archive of genealogical and family history data; the operation of the largest private university in the nation, if not in the world, with a related seminary and institute program embracing hundreds of

thousands of students; the staffing and management of the largest missionary organization of which I am aware, with the number now approaching 50,000; the carrying forward of a building program of unprecedented proportions; the operation of a very large and efficient publishing facility; and the training and motivation of the largest organization of noncompensated ecclesiastical officers to be found in any institution of which I know. I hesitate to use superlatives, but I think they fit in this case.

### **Concern for the individual**

We are becoming a great global society. But our interest and concern must always be with the individual. Every member of this church is an individual man or woman, boy or girl. Our great responsibility is to see that each is "remembered and nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4), that each has opportunity for growth and expression and training in the work and ways of the Lord, that none lacks the necessities of life, that the needs of the poor are met, that each member shall have encouragement, training, and opportunity to move forward on the road of immortality and eternal life. This, I submit, is the inspired genius of this the Lord's work. The organization can grow and multiply in numbers, as it surely will. This gospel must be carried to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. There can never be in the foreseeable future a standing still or a failure to reach out, to move forward, to build, to enlarge Zion across the world. But with all of this there must continue to be an intimate pastoral relationship of every member with a wise and caring bishop or branch president. These are the shepherds of the flock whose responsibility it is to look after the people in relatively small numbers so that none is forgotten, overlooked, or neglected.

Jesus was the true shepherd, who reached out to those in distress, one at a time, bestowing an individual blessing upon them.

President Lee told us on more than one occasion to survey large fields and cultivate small ones. He was saying that we must know the big picture and then assiduously work on the particular niche assigned to each of us, and that in doing so we concentrate on the needs of the individual.

### **Dedicate all efforts to the individual**

This work is concerned with people, each a son or daughter of God. In describing its achievements we speak in terms of numbers, but all of our efforts must be dedicated to the development of the individual.

For instance, President Hunter urged us to greater temple activity. This sacred work concerns the entire human family, past and present. But it is accomplished on an individual basis, with those who have received their own ordinances standing individually as proxy for another.

Likewise missionary service is a personal labor, with the missionary teaching and bearing witness to the investigator, who must search and pray alone in the quiet of his own soul if he or she is to gain a knowledge of the truth.

The gaining of a strong and secure testimony is the privilege and opportunity of every individual member of the Church. The Master said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Service in behalf of others, study, and prayer lead to faith in this work and then to knowledge of its truth. This has always been a personal pursuit, as it must always be in the future.

We speak frequently of Wilford Woodruff's conversion of the United Brethren in England when some 1,800 were baptized into the Church. But let

us not forget that each of them had to walk the lonely road of repentance, of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of acceptance of the fact that the ancient gospel had come again to earth in this the promised dispensation of the fulness of times.

### **Choose the right**

The decisions we make, individually and personally, become the fabric of our lives. That fabric will be beautiful or ugly according to the threads of which it is woven. I wish to say particularly to the young men who are here that you cannot indulge in any unbecoming behavior without injury to the beauty of the fabric of your lives. Immoral acts of any kind will introduce an ugly thread. Dishonesty of any kind will create a blemish. Foul and profane language will rob the pattern of its beauty.

"Choose the right when a choice is placed before you" is the call to each of us ("Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239).

### **Testimony and charge**

Now in conclusion, may I say that I glory in the wonderful, courageous, victorious past of this great work. I marvel at the present when you and I stand as watchmen upon the towers. I envision the future with hope, assurance, and certain faith.

God, our Eternal Father, lives. This is His work, designed to assist Him in "bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life" of His sons and daughters of all generations of time (Moses 1:39).

Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, who came to earth in the most humble of circumstances, who walked the dusty roads of Palestine teaching and healing, who died upon Golgotha's cruel cross and was resurrected the third day. This is His church. It carries His name. We are His servants, each of us. The priesthood which we bear is His priest-

hood, and we exercise it in His name. It was bestowed upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by those who held it anciently, having received it from the Lord Himself.

The gospel is the way of peace, of progress, of safety, of salvation, of exaltation. This, the last and final dispensation, was ushered in by the glorious appearance of the Father and the Son to the boy Joseph Smith. You and I, my brethren, have received this holy priesthood through the laying on of hands by those in authority. We must live worthy

of it. We must safeguard it. We must honor it. We must use it in righteousness for the blessing of others. God help us to be true to the great and sacred trust which has been given to each of us, I humbly pray, as I leave my blessing with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder F. David Stanley offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 165th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 165th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Tabernacle is filled to capacity, with overflow gatherings in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Russell M. Nelson, Charles Didier, and John E. Fowler are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Gene R. Cook and John B. Dickson are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, tele-

vision, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these facilities, who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled from far and wide to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." They will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, who comes from England, will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### The inextinguishable light of mercy

Not long ago I read a lengthy report concerning the violence and bloodshed that continue to stalk the land of what was once Yugoslavia. The killing and maiming seem to go on despite the efforts put forth to bring peace. The account of a sniper taking deadly aim and snuffing out the life of a small child brought sorrow to my soul. I silently asked, *Where to be found is that divine attribute of mercy?*

The cruelty of war seems to bring forth hatred toward others and disregard for human life. It has ever been so. Yet in such degradation at times there shines forth the inextinguishable light of mercy.

During the television documentaries shown throughout the fiftieth anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, the terrible toll in human life was graphically illustrated, and gripping firsthand experiences of soldiers who were there were shared. I particularly remember the comments of an American infantryman who said that after a day of ferocious fighting he glanced up from his shallow foxhole to see an enemy soldier with his gun barrel leveled at the American's heart. Said the infantryman: "I felt I was soon to cross over that bridge of death which leads to eternity. Incredibly my enemy, in broken English, said to me, 'Soldier, for you this war is over!' He took me prisoner and thus saved my life. Such mercy I shall remember forever."

### Richard Kirkland's errand of mercy

At an earlier time and in a different conflict—namely the American Civil War—a historically documented account illustrates courage coupled with mercy.

From December 11 to 13, 1862, the Union forces attacked Marye's Heights, a large hill overlooking Fredericksburg, Virginia, where 6,000 Rebels awaited

them. The Southern troops were in secure defensive positions behind a stone wall that meandered along the foot of the hill. In addition, they stood four deep on a sunken road behind the wall, out of sight of Union forces.

The Union troops—over 40,000 strong—launched a series of suicidal attacks across open ground. They were mowed down by a scythe of shot; none got closer than forty yards from the stone wall.

Soon the ground in front of the Confederate positions was littered with hundreds, then thousands of fallen Union soldiers in their blue uniforms—over 12,000 before sunset. Crying for help, the wounded lay in the bitter cold throughout that terrible night.

The next day, a Sunday, dawned cold and foggy. As the morning fog lifted, the agonized cries of the wounded could still be heard. Finally a young Confederate soldier, a nineteen-year-old sergeant, had had all he could take. The young man's name was Richard Rowland Kirkland. To his commanding officer, Kirkland exclaimed, "All night and all day I have heard those poor people crying for water, and I can stand it no longer. I . . . ask permission to go and give them water."

His request was initially denied on the grounds that it was too dangerous. Finally, however, permission was granted, and soon thousands of amazed men on both sides saw the young soldier, with several canteens draped around his neck, climb over the wall and walk to the nearest wounded Union soldier. He raised the stricken man's head, gently gave him a drink, and covered him with his own overcoat. Then he moved to the next of the wounded—and the next and the next. As Kirkland's purpose became clear, fresh cries of "Water, water, for God's sake, water!" arose all over the field.

The Union soldiers were at first too surprised to shoot. Soon they began to cheer the young Southerner as they saw what he was doing. For more than an hour and a half, Sergeant Kirkland continued his work of mercy.

Tragically, Richard Kirkland was himself killed a few months later at the battle of Chicamauga. His last words to his companions were, "Save yourselves, and tell my pa I died right."

Kirkland's Christlike compassion made his name synonymous with mercy for a post-Civil War generation, both North and South. He became known by soldiers on both sides of the conflict as "the angel of Marye's Heights." His loving errand of mercy is commemorated by a bronze monument which stands today in front of the stone wall at Fredericksburg. It depicts Sergeant Kirkland lifting the head of a wounded Union soldier to give him a drink of refreshing water. A tablet to Kirkland's honor hangs in the Episcopal church in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. With simple eloquence it captures the essence of the young soldier's mission of mercy. It reads: "A hero of benevolence, at the risk of his own life, he gave his enemy drink at Fredericksburg."<sup>1</sup>

The words of William Shakespeare describe Kirkland's deed:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from  
heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice  
blest:  
It blesseth him that gives and him  
that takes: . . .  
It is an attribute to God himself.<sup>2</sup>

### **The greatest act of mercy**

Two brilliant and faith-filled counselors to President David O. McKay spoke to us everlasting counsel concerning the greatest act of mercy ever known

to man. President Stephen L. Richards said, "The Savior himself declared that he came to fulfill the law, not to do away with it, but with the law he brought the principle of mercy to temper its enforcement, and to bring hope and encouragement to [the] offenders for forgiveness through [mercy and] repentance."<sup>3</sup>

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. testified:

"You know, I believe that the Lord will help us. I believe if we go to him, he will give us wisdom, if we are living righteously. I believe he will answer our prayers. I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save every one of his children. I do not think he intends to shut any of us off because of some slight transgression, some slight failure to observe some rule or regulation. There are the great elementals that we must observe, but he is not going to be captious about the lesser things.

"I believe that his juridical concept of his dealings with his children could be expressed in this way: I believe that in his justice and mercy he will give us the maximum reward for our acts, give us all that he can give, and in the reverse, I believe that he will impose upon us the minimum penalty which it is possible for him to impose."<sup>4</sup>

"I often think that one of the most beautiful things in the Christ's life was his words on the cross, when, suffering under the agony of a death that is said to have been the most painful that the ancients could devise, death on the cross, after he had been unjustly, illegally, contrary to all the rules of mercy, condemned and then crucified, when he had been nailed to the cross and was about to give up his life, he said to his Father in heaven, as those who were within hearing testify: ' . . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' (Luke 23:34.)"<sup>5</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, Alma describes beautifully the foregoing with



these words: "The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also."<sup>6</sup>

### The need for mercy

From the springboard of such knowledge we ask ourselves, *Why, then, do we see on every side those instances where people decline to forgive one another and show forth the cleansing act of mercy and forgiveness? What blocks the way for such healing balm to cleanse human wounds? Is it stubbornness? Could it be pride? Maybe hatred has yet to melt and disappear.* "Blame keeps wounds open. . . . Only forgiveness heals!"<sup>7</sup>

Recently I read where an elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel they had divided the room in half with a chalk line and neither had crossed the line nor spoken a word to the other since that day—sixty-two years before! What a human tragedy—all for the want of mercy and forgiveness.

At times the need for mercy can be found close to home and in simple settings. We have a four-year-old grandson named Jeffrey. One day his fifteen-year-old brother, Alan, had just completed, on the family computer, a most difficult and rather ingenious design of an entire city. When Alan slipped out of the room for just a moment, little Jeffrey approached the computer and accidentally erased the program. Upon his return, Alan was furious when he observed what his brother had done. Sensing that his doom was at hand, Jeffrey raised his finger and, pointing it toward Alan, declared from his heart and soul, "Remem-

ber, Alan, Jesus said, 'Don't hurt little boys.'" Alan began to laugh; anger subsided; mercy prevailed.

There are those among us who torture themselves through their inability to show mercy and to forgive others some supposed offense or slight, however small it may be. At times the statement is made, "I never can forgive [this person or that person]." Such an attitude is destructive to an individual's well-being. It can canker the soul and ruin one's life. In other instances an individual can forgive another but cannot forgive himself. Such a situation is even more destructive.

### Forgiving ourselves

Early in my ministry as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I took to President Hugh B. Brown the experience of a fine person who could not serve in a ward position because he could not show mercy to himself. He could forgive others but not himself; mercy was seemingly beyond his grasp. President Brown suggested that I visit with that individual and counsel him along these lines:

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."<sup>8</sup>

Then from Isaiah and the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."<sup>9</sup>

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>10</sup>

With a pensive expression on his face, President Brown added, "Tell that man that he should not persist in remembering that which the Lord has said He is willing to forget." Such counsel will help to cleanse the soul and renew the spirit of any who apply it.

The Prophet Joseph urged: "Be merciful and you shall find mercy. Seek to help save souls, not to destroy them: for verily you know, that 'there is more joy in heaven, over one sinner that repents, than there is over ninety and nine just persons [who] need no repentance.'" <sup>11</sup>

### **Correct small mistakes before they fester**

At times a small mistake can fester and bring distress and heartache to him or her who harbors and dwells on the matter, leaving it uncorrected. All of us are subject to such an experience. Let me share with you an example with a beautiful ending. I recently received a note, with a key enclosed, which read:

"Dear President Monson, Thirteen years ago this summer my husband and I stayed at the Hotel Utah. As a memento of our vacation, I took this hotel key and have felt bad about it ever since. I know that the Church owns the former Hotel Utah, and so I am returning this key to you—to the Church—in an effort to set this right. I am so sorry for having taken the key. Please, please, forgive me."

I thought to myself, *What honesty; what a sweet spirit the writer must possess.* I replied as follows:

"Dear Sister, Thank you for your thoughtful note and for the Hotel Utah key which you returned. My heart was touched by your sincerity. Though the key itself weighed very little, apparently this has been a heavy burden for you to carry for such a long time. Though the key was of very little worth, its return is of far greater value. I am honored to accept the key and know that you are certainly forgiven. Please accept the enclosed gift with my warmest wishes."

The key was returned to her, mounted on an attractive plaque.

Should you or I have erred or spoken harshly to another, it is good to take steps to straighten out the matter and to move onward with our lives. "He [who]

cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for every one has need to be forgiven."<sup>12</sup>

### **Jesus forgives an adulteress**

One of the most touching examples of mercy and forgiveness is the well-remembered experience in the life of Jesus when he "went unto the mount of Olives.

"And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are . . . thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."<sup>13</sup>

The sands of time quickly erased what the Savior had written, but forever will be remembered the mercy He showed.

### Blessed are the merciful

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,  
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.  
I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,  
That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died. . . .

I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt!  
Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?  
No, no, I will praise and adore at the mercy seat,  
Until at the glorified throne I kneel at his feet.<sup>14</sup>

This same Jesus, "seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, . . .

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."<sup>15</sup>

My sincere and humble prayer this Sabbath day is that each of us may be the provider and the recipient of mercy—the divine gift. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *The Battle Fredericksburg*, Eastern Acorn Press, 1990; "He Gave His Enemy Drink," *CWT Illustrated*, Oct.

1962, pp. 38–39. Information on Richard Kirkland provided by staff of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

2. *The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 184–95.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1954, p. 11.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1953, p. 84.
5. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Oct. 1955, p. 24.
6. Alma 42:15.
7. From *O Pioneers!* videocassette; Hallmark Hall of Fame adaptation of the novel by Willa Cather, 1991.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
9. Isaiah 1:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 77.
12. George Herbert, quoted in Frank S. Mead, ed., *12,000 Religious Quotations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 147.
13. John 8:1–11.
14. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193.
15. Matthew 5:1–2, 7.

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The choir sang "Come unto Him."

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### President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Come unto Him."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

## President James E. Faust

### Humbled and grateful to serve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, in responding at this pulpit as the newest member of the First Presidency of this church, I recall the words of Solomon, who said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."<sup>1</sup> Like Solomon, I pray that God will give me an understanding heart. We miss our beloved friend and associate, President Howard W. Hunter, beyond expression. We honor and praise his name. His memory will be blessed to us forever.

President Hinckley has honored me beyond my ability to express in asking me to serve as his second counselor. I don't think that even my mother ever dreamed that her son would sit in these chairs. As I explained last night in general priesthood meeting, my long association with President Gordon B. Hinckley has blessed me over most of my adult life. As you know, he is a man of remarkable gifts and talents. All these long years he has been teaching, guiding, and blessing all of us. Over the years we have seen him grow in strength as the Lord has time and time again called and magnified him. He has had increasingly burdensome responsibilities in many callings, including as a counselor to three Presidents of the Church. He has magnified each calling he has received with great inspiration, intelligence, and energy in a remarkable way. His ministry has blessed the work of God throughout the world.

I also feel privileged to have worked so closely with President Thomas S. Monson ever since he was the newest Apostle. President Monson has been blessed with a great mind and capacity. He has always been an outstanding leader as a boy and a man. Great responsibilities came upon him very early in life to school him. He is a man of great, simple faith. His outgoing and car-

ing heart has blessed the people of this church tremendously over the many years of his ministry.

### The Church's rich cultural diversity

Today I would like to speak to the members of the Church worldwide. I hope we can all overcome any differences of culture, race, and language. Since the early days of the Church, the General Authorities and missionaries have traveled over much of the earth to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to establish the Church with keys and authority in many lands. An impressive and enjoyable part of our ministry has been to worship with the wonderful people of many cultures and ethnic groups. It has been soul satisfying to feel of their spiritual strength and their love and to love them in return.

Now the curtains are opening up to more and more of the nonindustrialized nations. In some of these countries a large percentage of the population is poor. Many of them have much less opportunity than others to acquire the comforts of life and even some of the necessities. We have seen men and women working to exhaustion from sunrise to sundown for a pittance. Yet their ready smiles and cheerful countenances indicated that they had found some happiness with their lot in life.

Some might say, "Where is the justice in the fact that some of God's children have so much of health and this world's goods and others so very little?" So many of those who have in abundance seem unappreciative of what they have. But we have also seen the generosity of members of this church who have great concern for those worldwide who lack the necessities of life. They generously contribute to help the poor in many countries, even though we have no mem-

bers there. Humanitarian help has been given in 114 countries since 1985.<sup>2</sup>

I have learned to admire, respect, and love the good people from every race, culture, and nation that I have been privileged to visit. In my experience, no race or class seems superior to any other in spirituality and faithfulness. Those who seem less caring spiritually are those individuals—regardless of race, culture, or nationality—spoken of by the Savior in the parable of the sower who are “choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Look to the divinity within**

One of this nation’s leading pollsters, Richard Wirthlin, has identified through polls an expression of the basic needs of people in the United States. These needs are self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment. I believe these are needs of God’s children everywhere. How can these needs be satisfied? I suggest that behind each of these is the requirement to establish one’s own personal identity as the offspring of God. All three needs, regardless of ethnic background, culture, or country, can be met if we look to the divinity that is within us. As the Savior himself has said, “And the Spirit giveth light to every man [and woman] that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man [and woman] through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

President David O. McKay said:

“Generally there is in man a divinity which strives to push him onward and upward. We believe that this power within him is the spirit that comes from God. Man lived before he came to this earth, and he is here now to strive to perfect the spirit within. At sometime in his life, every man is conscious of a desire to come in touch with the Infinite. His spirit reaches out for God. This sense of

feeling is universal, and all men ought to be, in deepest truth, engaged in the same great work—the search for and the development of spiritual peace and freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Satisfy basic needs through obedience**

As the humble servants of God—the General Authorities, the missionaries, and others—travel throughout the world, we are compelled to ask: What can we do for the peoples of the earth? What can we give that no one else can? What can justify the great expenditure of effort, time, and means to “go . . . into all the world,”<sup>6</sup> as the Savior commanded. We cannot change the economy of countries. We do not seek to change governments. The answer is simple. We can offer the hope promised by the Savior: “Peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>7</sup>

Lives are changed as the servants of God teach God’s children everywhere to accept and keep the commandments of God. Anyone, regardless of culture or economic circumstance, can go to the depths of his spiritual wells and drink of that water. He who partakes of this water, as the Savior said, “shall never thirst; but [it] shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”<sup>8</sup> The basic needs of mankind identified by Dr. Wirthlin—self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment—can be fully satisfied by faithful obedience to the commandments of God. This is true of any person in any country or culture.

### **Seek a unity of the faith**

Though many lack the necessities of life, I take comfort in the words of Nephi: “But they were . . . one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.”<sup>9</sup>

As we move into more and more countries in the world, we find a rich cul-

tural diversity in the Church. Yet everywhere there can be a "unity of the faith."<sup>10</sup> Each group brings special gifts and talents to the table of the Lord. We can all learn much of value from each other. But each of us should also voluntarily seek to enjoy all of the unifying and saving covenants, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the great diversity of peoples, cultures, and circumstances, we remember that all are equal before the Lord, for as Paul taught:

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>11</sup>

### **Spiritual and doctrinal unity**

We do not lose our identity in becoming members of this church. We become heirs to the kingdom of God, having joined the body of Christ and spiritually set aside some of our personal differences to unite in a greater spiritual cause. We say to all who have joined the Church, "Keep all that is noble, good, and uplifting in your culture and personal identity." However, under the authority and power of the keys of the priesthood, all differences yield as we seek to become heirs to the kingdom of God, unite in following those who have the keys of the priesthood, and seek the divinity within us. All are welcomed and appreciated. But there is only one celestial kingdom of God.

Our real strength is not so much in our diversity but in our spiritual and doctrinal unity. For instance, the baptismal prayer and baptism by immersion in water are the same all over the world.

The sacramental prayers are the same everywhere. We sing the same hymns in praise to God in every country.

The high moral standards of this church apply to all members in every country. Honesty and integrity are taught and expected everywhere. Chastity before marriage and absolute fidelity to wife or husband after marriage are required of members of the Church everywhere. Members who violate these high standards of moral conduct place their Church membership in question anywhere in the world.

The requirements for temple attendance do not change from place to place. Where a temple is available, priesthood authority gives no greater or lesser blessings in one place than another. Temple worship is a perfect example of our unity as Church members. All of us answer the same questions of worthiness to enter the temple. All the men dress alike. All the women dress alike. We leave the cares of the world behind us as we enter the temple. Everyone receives the same blessings. All make the same covenants. All are equal before the Lord. Yet within our spiritual unity there is wide room for everyone's individuality and expression. In that setting, all are heirs to the kingdom of God. President Hunter said it well: "The key to a unified church is a unified soul, one that is at peace with itself and not given to inner conflicts and tensions."<sup>12</sup>

### **Diverse people united by the Spirit**

The spiritual richness of our meetings seems to have little to do with the buildings or country in which we meet. Many years ago we went to Manaus, Brazil, a city far upstream on the Amazon River, surrounded by jungle, to meet with the missionaries and the handful of Saints who were then in that area. We met in a very humble home with no glass panes in the windows. The weather was excessively hot. The children sat on the

floor. The mission president, President Helio da Rocha Camargo, conducted the meeting and called on a faithful brother to give the opening prayer. The humble man responded, "I will be happy to pray, but may I also bear my testimony?" A sister was asked to lead the singing. She responded, "I would love to lead the singing, but please let me also bear my testimony."

And so it was all through the meeting with those who participated in any way. All felt impelled to bear their profound witness of the Savior and his mission and of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All who were there reached deep down in their souls to their spiritual taproots, remembering the Savior's words that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."<sup>13</sup> This they did more as heirs to the kingdom of God than as Brazilian members of the Church.

The multiplicity of languages and cultures is both an opportunity and a challenge for members of the Church. Having everyone hear the gospel in their own tongue requires great effort and resources. The Spirit, however, is a higher form of communication than language. We have been in many meetings where the words were completely unintelligible, but the Spirit bore powerful witness of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Even with language differences, hopefully no minority group would ever feel so unwelcome in the "body of Christ"<sup>14</sup> that they would wish to worship exclusively in their own ethnic culture. We hope that those in any dominant culture would reach out to them in the brotherhood and sisterhood of the gospel so that we can establish fully a community of Saints where everyone will feel needed and wanted.

### Recovering the sacred within us

Spiritual peace is not to be found in race or culture or nationality but rather

through our commitment to God and to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. Each of us, regardless of our nationality, needs to reach down into the innermost recesses of our souls to find the divinity that is deep within us and to earnestly petition the Lord for an endowment of special wisdom and inspiration. Only when we so profoundly reach the depths of our beings can we discover our true identity, our self-worth, and our purpose in life. Only as we seek to be purged of selfishness and of concern for recognition and wealth can we find some sweet relief from the anxieties, hurts, pains, miseries, and concerns of this world. In this manner, as President J. Reuben Clark said, we can bring "to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit."<sup>15</sup> God can not only help us find a sublime and everlasting joy and contentment, but He will change us so that we can become heirs of the kingdom of God.

This is really the recovery of the sacred within us. We have the authority in our beings to respond to challenges of life any way we choose. Thus we gain mastery in any circumstance. As the Savior said to the diseased woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."<sup>16</sup>

Mine is the certain knowledge that Jesus is our divine Savior, Redeemer, and the Son of God the Father. I know of his reality by a sure perception so sacred I cannot give utterance to it. I know and testify with an absolute awareness that Joseph Smith restored the keys of the fulness of times and that every President of the Church has held these keys, as does President Gordon B. Hinckley today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. 1 Kings 3:7.
2. "Helping Hearts and Hands Span the Globe," *Church News*, 11 Feb. 1995, pp. 8-10.
3. Luke 8:14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.

5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 7; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1057.
6. Mark 16:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
8. John 4:14.
9. 4 Nephi 1:17.
10. Ephesians 4:13.
11. Galatians 3:26–29.
12. *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994), p. 50.
13. Matthew 18:20.
14. 1 Corinthians 10:16; see also v. 17.
15. As cited in *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), p. i.
16. Matthew 9:22.

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The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

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### President Hinckley

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." We shall then hear from Elder Joe J. Christensen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder Joe J. Christensen

Barbara and I have been blessed with six children. Some years ago, when we had taken all of them to visit with their grandparents, my father said, "Joe, I think you and Barbara have started something you can't stop."

At this Easter season we declare to all the world that Jesus is the Christ and that through his holy priesthood and its sealing power, marriages and families need never stop—need never come to an end.

Today I would like to speak to all of you about our marriages. Here are eight practical suggestions that, hopefully, may be of value in strengthening our marriages, now and in the future.

### Remember the importance of marriage

1. Remember the central importance of your marriage. Listen to these words from Elder Bruce R. McConkie on the importance of marriage in our Father in Heaven's "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8):

"From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . .

"There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units" ("Salvation Is a Family Affair," *Improvement Era*, June 1970, pp. 43–44).

### Pray for the success of your marriage

2. Pray for the success of your marriage. Years ago, when it was common for a General Authority to tour a mission and interview all the missionaries, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was visiting with an elder who was just about to finish his mission.

"When you get released, Elder, what are your plans?"



"Oh, I plan to go back to college." And then with a smile he added, "Then I hope to fall in love and get married."

Elder Kimball shared this wise counsel: "Well, don't just pray to marry the one you love. *Instead, pray to love the one you marry.*"

We should pray to become more kind, courteous, humble, patient, forgiving, and, *especially*, less selfish.

In order to recognize our personal problems or weaknesses which hinder us from being better marriage partners, we should come to the Lord in prayer and reap the benefits of this powerful Book of Mormon promise: "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness . . . ; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

And so the need to pray. Many Church leaders and marriage counselors indicate that they have not seen one marriage in serious trouble where the couple was still praying together daily. When problems arise and marriages are threatened, praying together as a couple may be the most important remedy.

### Listen to your spouse

3. Listen. Make the time to listen to your spouse; even schedule it regularly. Visit with each other and assess how you are doing as a marriage partner.

Brother Brent Barlow posed a question to a group of priesthood brethren: "How many of you would like to receive a revelation?" Every hand went up. He then suggested that they all go home and ask their wives how they could be better husbands. He added, "I followed my own advice, and had a very informative discussion with [my wife] Susan for more than an hour that afternoon!" ("To Build a Better Marriage," *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, p. 17). A conversation like that could be a revelation for any of us.

Have any of you brethren ever had your wife say something like I heard recently: "Joe, are you listening?" She wasn't the only one who wondered if I was listening. Some time ago I was taking a nap and our little granddaughter Allison came and lifted up one of my eyelids and said, "Grandpa, are you in there?" We should be "in there" and responsive to our mate.

### Avoid ceaseless pinpricking

4. Avoid "ceaseless pinpricking." Don't be too critical of each other's faults. Recognize that none of us is perfect. We all have a long way to go to become as Christlike as our leaders have urged us to become.

"Ceaseless pinpricking," as President Kimball called it, can deflate almost any marriage ("Marriage and Divorce," *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977], p. 148). Generally each of us is painfully aware of our weaknesses, and we don't need frequent reminders. Few people have ever changed for the better as a result of constant criticism or nagging. If we are not careful, some of what we offer as *constructive* criticism is actually *destructive*.

At times it is better to leave some things unsaid. As a newlywed, Sister Lola Walters read in a magazine that in order to strengthen a marriage, couples should have regular, candid sharing sessions in which they would list any mannerisms they found to be annoying. She wrote:

"We were to name five things we found annoying, and I started off. . . . I told him that I didn't like the way he ate grapefruit. He peeled it and ate it like an orange! Nobody else I knew ate grapefruit like that. Could a girl be expected to spend a lifetime, and even eternity, watching her husband eat grapefruit like an orange? . . .

"After I finished [with my five], it was his turn to tell the things he disliked about me. [He] said, 'Well, to tell the truth, I can't think of anything I don't like about you, Honey.'

"Gasp.

"I quickly turned my back, because I didn't know how to explain the tears that had filled my eyes and were running down my face."

Sister Walters concluded, "Whenever I hear of married couples being incompatible, I always wonder if they are suffering from what I now call the Grapefruit Syndrome" ("The Grapefruit Syndrome," *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, p. 13).

Yes, at times, it is better to leave some things unsaid.

### **Keep your courtship alive**

5. Keep your courtship alive. Make time to do things together—just the two of you. As important as it is to be with the children as a family, you need regular weekly time alone together. Scheduling it will let your children know that you feel that your marriage is so important that you need to nurture it. That takes commitment, planning, and scheduling.

It doesn't need to be costly. The time together is the most important element.

Once when my father-in-law was leaving the house after lunch to return to the field to work, my mother-in-law said, "Albert, you get right back in here and tell me you love me." He grinned and jokingly said, "Elsie, when we were married, I told you I loved you, and if that ever changes, I'll let you know." It's hard to overuse the expression "I love you." Use it daily.

### **Be quick to say, "I'm sorry"**

6. Be quick to say, "I'm sorry." As hard as it is to form the words, be swift to say, "I apologize, and please forgive me," even though you are not the one who is totally at fault. True love is devel-

oped by those who are willing to readily admit personal mistakes and offenses.

When differences do arise, being able to discuss and resolve them is important, but there are instances when it is best to take a time-out. Biting your tongue and counting to ten or even a hundred is important. And occasionally, even letting the sun go down on your wrath can help bring you back to the problem in the morning more rested, calm, and with a better chance for resolution.

Occasionally we hear something like, "Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion." If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better.

### **Live within your means**

7. Learn to live within your means. Some of the most difficult challenges in marriage arise in the area of finances. "The American Bar Association . . . indicated that 89 percent of all divorces could be traced to quarrels and accusations over money" (Marvin J. Ashton, "One for the Money," *Ensign*, July 1975, p. 72). Be willing to postpone or forgo some purchases in order to stay within your budget. Pay your tithing first, and avoid debt insofar as possible. Remember that spending fifty dollars a month less than you receive equals happiness and spending fifty more equals misery. The time may have come to get out the scissors and your credit cards and perform what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called some "plastic surgery" ("Things We Have Learned—Together," *Ensign*, June 1986, p. 30).

### Share home and family responsibilities

8. Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities. Don't be like the husband who sits around home expecting to be waited on, feeling that earning the living is his chore and that his wife alone is responsible for the house and taking care of the children. The task of caring for home and family is more than one person's responsibility.

Remember that you are in this partnership together. Barbara and I have discovered that we can make our bed every morning in less than a minute and it's done for the day. She says that she lets me do it to help me feel good about myself all day, and I guess there may be something to that.

Find time to study the scriptures together, and follow this sound counsel from President Kimball: "When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, . . . and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle" (*Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], p. 24).

In summary:

- Remember the central importance of your marriage.
- Pray for its success.
- Listen.
- Avoid "ceaseless pinpricking."
- Keep your courtship alive.
- Be quick to say, "I'm sorry."
- Learn to live within your means.
- Be a true partner in home and family responsibilities.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that the tomb was empty on that third day, and that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Thus with gratitude for the sealing power within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we can confidently say with the poet, "I shall but love thee better after death" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, no. 43, line 14). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Joe J. Christensen has spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Sustaining new leaders

I join in welcoming Elder Henry B. Eyring to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who are so ably presided over by President Boyd K. Packer. Elder Eyring is a special blend of brightness and sweetness. I am delighted to sustain President James E. Faust, my seatmate of fourteen years and for over thirty years a companion in various civic chores and Church assignments. I have been blessed with five wonderful sisters but no broth-

ers. President Faust has been that kind of brother to me for many years.

I renew my appreciation and sustaining vote for President Thomas S. Monson, who, over that same span of time, has given me opportunities, has tutored me, and has encouraged me. He is sometimes best known for feats of memory, but his quiet acts of kindness are much more important.

In 1935 a returning missionary, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, was asked to visit with the First Presidency because of his

special work in the British Isles. His fifteen-minute appointment soon stretched to nearly an hour and a half. Impressed, the First Presidency requested him to help with missionary work, and he has scarcely left the Church Administration Building since then. Only now he sits, humbly, in the center chair in the First Presidency Council Room to which he came humbly sixty years ago!

President Hinckley is a special blend of the practical and the spiritual, possessing a keen mind furnished with fixed principles. When we rightly describe him as having good judgment, good humor, goodwill, and as being a good listener, the common adjective is *good*. Goodness is thus the key to so much of what makes up President Hinckley, whom I am delighted to sustain as our President, prophet, seer, and revelator, the high calling which has come after such unusual preparation of this exceptional disciple of Christ.

### **Deny yourselves of all ungodliness**

Jesus' instructions concerning discipleship involve both substance and sequence: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny* himself, and *take up* his cross daily, and *follow me*" (Luke 9:23; italics added). Elsewhere, Moroni declared the need for us to deny ourselves "all ungodliness" (Moroni 10:32), thus including both large and small sins. While boulders surely block our way, loose gravel slows discipleship too. Even a small stone can become a stumbling block.

King Benjamin and Paul both stressed the congenital weakness of the natural man, who is turned away from God and who regards spiritual things as "foolishness" (see Mosiah 3:19; 1 Corinthians 2:13-14; Colossians 3:9). Thus, putting off the views and appetites of the natural man is such a large part of denying oneself, a process sometimes accompanied by scalding shame and the reflux of re-

gret (see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28).

Even so, in today's world, individual appetites, far from being denied, are actually celebrated! As one writer noted, this mantra has its own incessant "beat," and it goes "Me . . . Me . . . Me . . . Me!" (Tom Wolfe, "The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening," in *The Purple Decades* [New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982], p. 293).

Yet sensory happiness is illusory happiness. Even legitimate pleasure is as transitory as the things which produce it, while joy is as lasting as the things which produce it!

Of all today's malevolent "isms," hedonism takes the greatest toll. It is naive to say that hedonists merely march to the beat of a different drummer. So did the Gadarene swine!

### **The moral crisis of sexual immorality**

A quarter of a century ago historian John Lukacs perceptively warned that sexual immorality was not merely a marginal development but, instead, was at the center of the moral crisis of our time (see *The Passing of the Modern Age* [New York: Harper and Row, 1970], p. 169). Some thought Lukacs was overstating it, but consider the subsequent and sobering tragedy of children having children, of unwed mothers, of children without parents, of hundreds of thousands of fatherless children, and of rampant spousal infidelity. These and related consequences threaten to abort society's future even before the future arrives! Yet carnalists are unwilling to deny themselves, even though all of society suffers from an awful avalanche of consequences!

Consider this sobering forecast: "About 40 percent of U.S. children will go to sleep in homes in which their fathers do not live" (David Blankenhorn, "Life without Father," *USA Weekend*, 26 Feb. 1995, pp. 6-7).

Some estimate this will rise to 60 percent. This same commentator has written, "Fatherlessness is the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to domestic violence" (Blankenhorn, p. 7). Such outcomes, brothers and sisters, unfortunately constitute America's grossest national product, produced in the slums of the spirit created by spreading secularism!

### **The scourge of hedonism**

In Proverbs we read, "For the commandment is a lamp" (Proverbs 6:23). Once darkened, a society loses its capacity to distinguish between right and wrong and the will to declare that some things are wrong *per se*. Without the lamp, our world finds itself desperately building temporary defenses, drawing new lines, forever falling back, unwilling to confront. A society which permits anything will eventually lose everything!

Therefore, recognized or not, the public has an enormous stake in private morality! Yet today there is so much hedonism and shouted justification with so little quiet shame. Bad deeds are viewed as nobody's fault and everything as excusable on one basis or another.

Amid such inversions, no wonder victims are often neglected and the guilty sometimes glorified. Likewise, in place of real confessions there are fluid variations of "I hope I can forgive myself." In contrast, the inquiring Apostles knew the direction in which they faced; all anxiously asked Jesus of the impending betrayal, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22).

Gross sins arise ominously and steadily out of the swamp of self-indulgence and self-pity. But the smaller sins breed there too, like insects in the mud, including the coarsening of language. But why should we expect those who "mind the things of the flesh" to mind their tongues? (Romans 8:5).

For some, their god "is their belly," as are other forms of anatomical alle-

giance! (Philippians 3:19). A few hedonists actually glory in their shame, and there is even a "greediness" in their "uncleanness" (Ephesians 4:19). Sadly too, a few envy the wicked. Still others complain that the wicked seem to get away with it! (see Proverbs 23:17; Malachi 3:14-15).

Ironically, in all their eagerness to experience certain things, hedonists become desensitized. People who wrongly celebrate their capacity to feel finally reach a point where they lose much of their capacity to feel! In the words of three different prophets, such individuals become "past feeling" (see 1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20).

When people proceed "without principle," erelong they will be "without civilization," "without mercy," and "past feeling" (see Moroni 9:11-20). Such individuals do not experience real joy, such as being quietly and deeply grateful to a generous God, or of helping to restore those who "droop in sin" (2 Nephi 4:28), or of gladly forgoing praise and recognition so that it might flow, instead, to parched souls.

Our physical as well as our familial environment is likewise threatened by selfishness. But some worry only about holes in the ozone layer, while the fabric of many families who lack the lamp resembles Swiss cheese.

### **The need for self-denial**

Of course we can't wave a wand and fix families instantly. Some levees and sandbags must be placed downstream. But the real problem lies at the family fountainhead. Many things will not get better until we have better families, but this will require much more self-denial, not less. Most major social and political problems simply cannot be solved without large doses of self-denial; ironically, this is a quality best developed in loving families where the lamp is lit.

Meanwhile, mortals remain free to choose between the things of the mo-

ment and the things of eternity (see 2 Nephi 2:27). Given the choices made by some, we all end up with more protected pornography than protected children. Of course better self-restraint than censorship, but urging self-restraint on hedonists is like discouraging Dracula from hanging around the blood bank!

No wonder most of the Ten Commandments are self-denying "Thou shalt nots." Heavenly Father loves his children perfectly, but he knows our tendencies perfectly too. To lie, steal, murder, envy, be sexually immoral, neglect parents, break the Sabbath, and bear false witness—all occur because one mistakenly seeks to please himself for the moment regardless of divine standards or human consequences. As prophesied, ethical relativism is now in steep crescendo: "Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

### **Distortions caused by self-indulgence**

Without the lamp's perspective, gross distortion results (see Jacob 4:13–14). I remember reading that one Nazi leader used to listen to Haydn's music while watching Jewish people being gassed. He was probably proud of his music appreciation.

Mussolini is said to have made Italy's trains run on time, a genuine convenience to passengers, but scarcely compensation for the awful consequences of his totalitarian rule and the tens of thousands of lives lost thereby.

We all admire young David for taking on the mocking Goliath. But David's act of earlier bravery cannot compensate for his later adultery with the wife of Uriah. All things considered, brothers and sisters, to whom did David deal the greater blow, Goliath or Uriah? Or himself?

In the same vein, God's second commandment, love thy neighbor, clearly

leaves no room for racism. Yet it is not enough to be free of racism if one is simultaneously enslaved by other appetites. Jesus emphasized the need for proportion, saying there are "weightier matters" even among good things (Matthew 23:23). To the commandment-keeping young man, Jesus responded, "One thing thou lackest," referring to an errant attachment to material possessions (Mark 10:21). Most of us lack more than just one thing. As we come closer to the Lord, He has promised to "show unto [us our] weakness" (Ether 12:27). Hence, general goodness is no excuse for failing to work on those things which we yet lack.

### **Dangers of "small sins"**

Any list of our present personal indulgences is actually an index—but a reverse index to joys—joys we will not experience until we do deny ourselves certain things. Meanwhile, the absence of gross sins in our lives can lull us into slackness concerning seemingly small sins. The failure to visit and care for parents is a failure to honor one's father and mother. In its lesser form, the lack of self-restraint causes unkind comments to a spouse, but in the extreme it can bring domestic abuse and even murder. The tendency to strike back whenever we are offended makes us brusque and rude, as if others were functions, not brothers and sisters. Thus, excess of ego is like a spreading, toxic spill from which flow all the deadly sins (see Proverbs 6:16–19). Young parents know how a mere half cup of spilled milk seems to cover half a kitchen floor. Small sins spread like that too.

### **Self-denial precedes full joy in Christ**

With His perfect, spiritual symmetry, Jesus really is "the way, the truth, and the life," His way being in such sharp contrast to the world's ways (John 14:6).

Jesus' perfect character is thus not only holy, but wholly complete and finished. Without Jesus' supernal character, He could not have accomplished the astonishing atonement! And He has asked us to become much more like Him (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27). Though heavy, discipleship's burden can be made light (see Matthew 11:30). The Lord can "ease the burdens," and our shoulders can be made strong enough that we "may be able to bear it" (Mosiah 24:14; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

So it is that real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and letting it be consumed! Such is the "sacrifice unto the Lord . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit," (D&C 59:8), a prerequisite to taking up the cross, while giving

"away all [our] sins" in order to know God (Alma 22:18); for the denial of self precedes the full acceptance of Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Know My Father Lives."

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### **President Hinckley**

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has just addressed us, and the choir has sung "I Know My Father Lives."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Our Savior's Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Kwok Yuen Tai of the Seventy, who comes from Hong Kong. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My beloved brothers and sisters wherever you may be, my dear friends and associates in this great work, as you can well understand, this for me is a most solemn and sacred occasion. Humbly I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit as I struggle to share with you the feelings of my heart. If in the circumstances I speak unduly much in a personal vein, I hope you will excuse me. I shall then try to put the first person singular behind me.

### **The passing of President Hunter**

We have mourned in recent days the passing of our beloved friend and leader, Howard William Hunter, the fourteenth President of the Church and prophet to the people. His tenure in office was brief, but the impression for good that he left was tremendous. Mild of manner, quiet in his ways, he was nonetheless a man whose strong convictions of the truth of

this work made him powerfully persuasive in his advocacy of the Christlike life.

He suffered much in his body before he was finally taken from us on the morning of March 3, 1995. More than 25,000 men, women, and children passed by his bier as his body lay in state in the beautiful rotunda of the Church Administration Building. With measured step they came one by one, reverently and with love for the man they had sustained only a few months before.

On Wednesday, March 8, 1995, his funeral services were held in this historic tabernacle and broadcast far and wide. Those services were a fitting memorial to a man of goodness and greatness who now belongs to the ages. Our hearts reach out with love and sympathy to his bereaved widow and to his sons and their families, now spanning three generations. May they be comforted,

sustained, and blessed by Him who declared, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you" (Isaiah 51:12).

### **Reorganizing the First Presidency**

With President Hunter's passing, the First Presidency was dissolved. Brother Monson and I, who had served as his counselors, took our places in the Quorum of the Twelve, which became the presiding authority of the Church.

Three weeks ago today all of the living ordained Apostles gathered in a spirit of fasting and prayer in the upper room of the temple. Here we sang a sacred hymn and prayed together. We partook of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, renewing in that sacred, symbolic testament our covenants and our relationship with Him who is our divine Redeemer. The Presidency was then reorganized, following a precedent well established through generations of the past. There was no campaigning, no contest, no ambition for office. It was quiet, peaceful, simple, and sacred. It was done after the pattern which the Lord Himself had put in place.

We have received from many people expressions of congratulations and confidence. These have come from members of the Church and from those not of our faith. To one and all I express my deep appreciation. I know full well that it is not the man whom they compliment but, rather, the office.

Yesterday morning members of the Church across the world met together in a solemn assembly. You raised your hands, without compulsion and of your own free will, to confirm the action taken by the Apostles three weeks ago and to sustain those called to serve.

As you know, mine has been the special privilege to serve as a counselor to three great Presidents. I think I know something of the meaning of heavy responsibility. But with all of that, I have,

during these past few days, been overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy and total dependency upon the Lord, who is my head and whose church this is; upon the strength of these good men who are my counselors; upon my dear Brethren of the Twelve, of the Seventy, and of the Presiding Bishopric; and upon the membership of the Church throughout the world. I search for words to express the depth of my gratitude and my appreciation and my love.

Years ago I gave a talk on the loneliness of leadership. Now for the first time I realize the full import of that loneliness. I do not know why this mantle has fallen upon my shoulders. I suppose some of you may also wonder. But we are here.

### **Valiant pioneer forebears**

In circumstances such as these, one's searching thoughts go back over all of the years of one's life and even beyond. I am of only the third generation in the Church. My grandfather as a boy was baptized in the summer of 1836 in Ontario, Canada. His widowed mother eventually brought her two boys to Springfield, Illinois. From there my grandfather walked to Nauvoo, where he listened to the Prophet Joseph Smith. When the exodus of our people occurred in 1846, he was an eighteen-year-old youth of strength and capacity and faith. He was a skilled builder of wagons and a blacksmith. He was among those whom President Young requested to remain for a time in Iowa to assist those still on the westward trail. He married in 1848 and set out for this valley in the spring of 1850.

Somewhere along that wearisome trail, his young wife sickened and died. With his own hands he dug a grave, split logs to make a coffin, lovingly buried her, then tearfully took their eleven-month-old child in his arms and marched on to this valley.



He was among those who repeatedly were called by President Young to undertake a variety of difficult assignments incident to the establishment of our people in these mountain valleys. He served as president of the Millard Stake of Zion when there were only a handful of stakes, and when it included a vast area of central Utah, traveling thousands of miles by horse and buggy in the discharge of his ministry. He gave so generously of his substance in the establishment of schools that his once substantial estate was small at the time of his death.

#### **Gratitude for parents, wife, and children**

My father was similarly a man of great faith who served the Church without reservation in many trusted capacities. For a number of years he presided over what was then the largest stake in the Church, with more than 15,000 members. My mother and grandmothers were likewise women of great faith whose lives were not always easy because of requirements made upon them by the Church. But they did not complain. They met their responsibilities with cheerfulness and devotion.

For these forebears I feel a great sense of gratitude and love and an almost overwhelming obligation to keep the trust which they have passed. To my beloved wife of fifty-eight years later this month, I express appreciation. How empty our lives would be without these, our wonderful companions. How grateful I am for this precious woman who has walked at my side through sunshine and storm. We do not stand as tall as we once did. But there has been no shrinkage in our love one for another.

I likewise speak with gratitude for my children and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who have honored us with the goodness of their lives.

#### **Gratitude for Church members**

And most particularly, to each of you I express my deep appreciation. I have had opportunity to travel far and wide across this church during the thirty-seven years of my service as a General Authority. Everywhere I have gone, I have met wonderful people. There is so much of goodness in the lives of the Latter-day Saints. There are such tremendous expressions of faith in the service which you give. I know something of the sacrifices made by many of you. I wish I had the capacity to express my feelings of love and gratitude for you. I stand as your servant and pledge to you and to the Lord my very best effort as I ask for your continuing faith and prayers and uplifted hands.

I am fully aware that I am not a young man as I shoulder the responsibilities of this sacred office. Sister Hinckley and I are learning that the so-called golden years are laced with lead. But I think I can honestly say that I do not feel old. I cannot repudiate my birth certificate, but I can still experience a great, almost youthful exuberance in my enthusiasm for this precious work of the Almighty.

#### **Expression of love**

I love the people of this church of all ages, of all races, and of many nations.

I love the children. They are very much the same the world over. Regardless of the color of their skin and of the circumstances in which they live, they carry with them a beauty that comes of innocence and of the fact that it was not long ago that they lived with their Father in Heaven. How lovely you are, wherever you are, you precious children.

I love the youth of the Church. I have said again and again that I think we have never had a better generation than this. How grateful I am for your integ-

rity, for your ambition to train your minds and your hands to do good work, for your love for the word of the Lord, and for your desire to walk in paths of virtue and truth and goodness.

I have tremendous respect for fathers and mothers who are nurturing their children in light and truth, who have prayer in their homes, who spare the rod and govern with love, who look upon their little ones as their most valued assets to be protected, trained, and blessed.

I love the elderly who have faced into the storms of life and who, regardless of the force of the tempest, have gone forward and kept the faith. May your older years be filled with happiness and with satisfying remembrance of lives well lived.

### **Be faithful in doing the Lord's work**

Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion I wish to leave with you one thought which I hope you will never forget.

This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said:

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

"And in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord" (D&C 81:4).

Further, "And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father" (D&C 81:6).

All of us in this great cause are of one mind, of one belief, of one faith.

You have as great an opportunity for satisfaction in the performance of your duty as I do in mine. The progress of this work will be determined by our joint efforts. Whatever your calling, it is as fraught with the same kind of opportunity to accomplish good as is mine. What is really important is that this is the work of the Master. Our work is to go about doing good, as did He.

If in my service I have offended anyone, I offer my apology. To those who for any reason find yourselves outside the embrace of the Church you once enjoyed, I invite you to return and partake of the happiness you once knew. You will find many with outstretched arms to warmly welcome you and assist you.

### **Respect people of other faiths**

I plead with our people everywhere to live with respect and appreciation for those not of our faith. There is so great a need for civility and mutual respect among those of differing beliefs and philosophies. We must not be partisans of any doctrine of ethnic superiority. We live in a world of diversity. We can and must be respectful toward those with whose teachings we may not agree. We must be willing to defend the rights of others who may become the victims of bigotry.

I call attention to these striking words of Joseph Smith spoken in 1843:

"If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon,' I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for

the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination" (*History of the Church*, 5:498).

#### **A time to become more Christlike**

Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships—in other words, to become more Christlike.

We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. He will overrule for the good of this work. He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments. Such has been His promise. Of His ability to keep that promise none of us can doubt.

#### **This is the work of the Almighty**

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, as seen in Daniel's vision, is rolling forth to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:44–45). No force under the heavens can stop it

if we will walk in righteousness and be faithful and true. The Almighty Himself is at our head. Our Savior, who is our Redeemer, the Great Jehovah, the mighty Messiah, has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

"Therefore," said He, "fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

"Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (D&C 6:34, 36–37).

Unitedly, working hand in hand, we shall move forward as servants of the living God, doing the work of His Beloved Son, our Master, whom we serve and whose name we seek to glorify.

I repeat, this, my brethren and sisters, is the work of the Almighty. He lives, our Father and our friend. It is the work of our Redeemer, who out of a love beyond comprehension gave His life for each of us. It is a divine work restored through a chosen prophet. It is a work to which we dedicate our lives as we invoke choice blessings upon you, our beloved associates, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Our Savior's Love."

Elder Kwok Yuen Tai offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 165th Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 2, 1995. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 165th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Neal A. Maxwell, William R. Bradford, and Augusto A. Lim are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Alexander B. Morrison and Jay E. Jensen are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many

friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin the service this day by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing "Faith of Our Fathers," after which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "Faith of Our Fathers."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Marriage, a divine institution

Aren't these flowers beautiful as they surround this pulpit? Just showing the good and ill in the world, though, they're also loaded with pollen!

Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. Achieving success in the home is a supernal challenge—no other success can compensate for it. Unless, however, a husband and wife learn to work together as one, marriage can also be an infernal ordeal. There are too many unhappy marriages in the

world today. There are too many marriages that do not stay the course, ending prematurely in divorce. There are too many children who are silently suffering from a lack of nurturing and care because their parents' union is unhappy or dissolved.

Before God created woman, He knew that man should not be alone. Following the creation of Eve, the first woman, the Lord instituted the union of marriage, then instructed the first man, Adam, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave

unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Adam learned that the bonds of marriage are stronger than any other family bond. The sacred bonds of marriage invite unity, fidelity, respect, and mutual support. We know from the scriptures that Adam and Eve learned this lesson. At the time they were cast out of the garden, it is recorded "that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as I the Lord had commanded him. And Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him" (Moses 5:1).

No single issue causes more concern among the leaders of churches and the leaders of nations than the alarming rate of breakup of marriages today. Statistics show that strong marriages produce strong families. The breakup of the family is causing serious social problems that are destroying our communities—including increases in poverty, crime, and delinquency.

The union between husband and wife is not something to be trifled with. The marriage covenant is essential for the Lord to accomplish His divine purposes. Consistently the Lord has declared that His divine laws were instituted to safeguard and protect the holy union between husband and wife.

Much of what we learn as members of the Church is by example. We learn as much from our prophets from what they do as what they say. Watching President Kimball, President Benson, and President Hunter, the men of the Church have learned volumes about how they should treat their wives—with gentleness, kindness, and devotion. The women of the Church have learned a related lesson as they have observed the wives of these great prophets. They have learned how to be poised and accomplished individuals while remaining supporting helpmates to their husbands. The sweet

relationship of President and Sister Hinckley offers both the men and women of the Church a marvelous example to observe and emulate.

### **Sister Hinckley, an elect lady**

Much will be said, written, and recorded about President Hinckley during the time he presides over the Church. Much less will be recorded about his dear companion, Marjorie. For you who have not had the opportunity of meeting Sister Hinckley, I would like to tell you something about her. What an example she has been and will continue to be to the women of the Church and to all the world. She is such a loyal, supportive companion to our President.

### **Sister Hinckley's great-grandfather**

Sister Hinckley's roots sink deeply into rich pioneer soil, leaving an indelible imprint on her life and character. She wrote this about her great-grandfather:

"On a beautiful Sunday morning in the fall of 1841, my great-grandfather, William Minshall Evans, then sixteen years of age, was walking down the streets of Liverpool, England, on his way to church. Suddenly he heard singing that thrilled him beyond anything he had ever heard before. He followed the sound down an alley and up some rickety stairs into a room where a few people were holding a meeting. John Taylor, who later became president of the Church and who had a beautiful tenor voice, was the singer. The song he sang was so beautiful that William remained to hear the sermon.

"Upon returning home, William was reprimanded by his elder brother, David, for being absent from his accustomed place in the choir. Asked to give an account of himself, William replied, 'I have been where you should have been, and I shall not be satisfied until you all hear

the wonderful truth I have heard this morning."

"... William and David were converted to the gospel, and then helped convert other members of their family" (Marjorie P. Hinckley, "Music Was the Missionary," *Ensign*, July 1981, p. 48).

Sister Hinckley commented, "I never sing the hymns of the Church without remembering that it was the singing of a hymn that opened the door to the gospel for my family and made it possible for me to enjoy all the blessings that have followed" (p. 48).

### **Sister Hinckley's grandfather**

President Hinckley shared the following story about Sister Hinckley's grandfather at the rededication of the Manti Temple. He said:

"Yesterday morning as we came here, Sister Hinckley and I were brought to the east temple door. They wanted to get us in quietly, I guess. But in any event we were brought privately to the east temple door, and the door was opened. There are two of them there (two sets of them), but the one we came through was opened—a very, very heavy door, some three inches thick, beautifully milled, beautifully put together, beautifully hung on substantial hardware. And it was a very touching experience because her grandfather, who was a young man then, at the time twenty-four years of age, married with one child and another one coming, hung those doors. And in the course of hanging those very heavy doors he suffered a hernia which became strangulated. He suffered terrible pain for a few days and died, literally a martyr to the faith which had prompted him to work on this temple as a finish carpenter over a long period of time, for which he received no compensation other than a pound of butter or a dozen eggs now and again" (fifth session, 15 June 1985).

We catch a glimpse from these two stories about Sister Hinckley's ancestors

of her special heritage and of her unique character. You see, Sister Hinckley has the same sensitivity to the Spirit as her great-grandfather and the same spirit of work and sacrifice as her grandfather.

### **Support of husband and children**

Over the years my wife and I have had the privilege of traveling on many assignments with President and Sister Hinckley. In our travels we have always found Sister Hinckley so positive and cheerful. Her enthusiastic and supportive attitude clearly lifts her husband. Often the trips have been long and tiring. Schedules may not have been ideal. Accommodations may not have been four-star, sometimes way below. But in the midst of turmoil, discomfort, or challenge, Sister Hinckley has maintained her composure and her naturally happy disposition. Each time we would step off a plane to greet the Saints at a new destination, her kind and loving spirit was contagious. She has set a standard of support for priesthood-leader husbands that literally brings out the best in them.

Sister Barbara Smith made this observation when President and Sister Hinckley, accompanied by their children, were celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary while he was fulfilling an assignment:

"On a typical evening, [President Hinckley] would be exhausted after a day of meetings, including the evening meal with local leaders. [Sister Hinckley] would attend to the conversation of her husband and the leaders for a time, then slip quietly away to be sure that all was well with her family.

"[You can] sense in this pattern the careful way that Sister Hinckley has been able, over the years, to respond to the needs of her children while at the same time supporting her husband in his critical role in the work of our Father's kingdom" (Barbara B. Smith and Shirley

W. Thomas, *Women of Devotion* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990], p. 5).

What an example she is to the wives of priesthood leaders all over the world!

With all of the pressures of Church service thrust on the Hinckley family, Sister Hinckley has always maintained a balance between her two eternal callings—those of wife and mother. Her success in the role as a mother is evidenced by the Hinckley children—Dick, Clark, Kathleen, Virginia, and Jane. Each child is a credit to their parents.

### **Motherhood, the noblest of all callings**

Sister Hinckley has said this about motherhood:

"It is the mothers of young children I would like to address first. These are golden years for you. These are years when you will probably do the most important work of your lives. Don't wish away your years of caring for small children. Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans. This is a time of great opportunity for you to build the kingdom. When you teach children to love their Heavenly Father, you have done one of the greatest things you will ever do. If you can be a full-time homemaker, be grateful. If not, you must do what is best for you. I for one have never felt a need to apologize for my role as a full-time homemaker.

"These are busy, busy days for you. I have seen women in all kinds of circumstances—Chinese women working on road repairs, European women working in the fields, Asian women sweeping streets—but it is my opinion that . . . Mormon women are among the hardest working women in the world. They plant gardens and [they] bottle the produce; they sew and bargain shop. They go on the heart fund drive. They take dinners to new mothers and the sick in their neighborhoods. They take care of aged parents. They climb Mount Timpanogos

with Cub Scouts, go to Little League games, sit on the piano bench while Jennie practices, do temple work, and worry about getting their journals up-to-date. My heart bursts with pride when I see them come into church on Sunday, some as early as 8:30 in the morning, their children all clean and shiny, their arms loaded with supplies, as they head for classes where they teach other women's children. They scrub their houses with little or no domestic help and then try to be the glamour girl in their husband's life when he arrives home at night. But remember, my dear young friends, that you are now doing the work that God intended you to do. Be grateful for the opportunity" ("Building the Kingdom from a Firm Foundation," in Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, eds., *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989], p. 5).

Motherhood is the noblest and greatest of all callings.

### **A worthy role model**

Sister Hinckley, you are an inspiration to all of us. You are diligent in seeking after the truths the Lord has revealed for our growth and development here in mortality. Your desire to know these truths has kept you busy studying the gospel. When the opportunity has availed itself, you have regularly signed up for institute classes to deepen your knowledge. That knowledge is clearly in evidence as you speak and teach the Saints. It is especially apparent when you stand before groups of full-time missionaries. Here you are at your best. How you inspire them, and how they respond to your instructions.

With all of the confusion existing in the world today over the role of women, you stand as a worthy role model for those who are still struggling to find the right balance in life. May they listen

when you declare how great it is to be eighty years of age because you can look back on a life filled with accomplishment, growth, understanding, faith, support, and fulfillment. You have said:

"Contrary to rumor, these *are* golden years, if you have a measure of good health. At this age, my dear contemporaries, we no longer have to compete with anyone. We don't have to prove anything—we just have to enjoy it all. How many of you have told your children how wonderful it is to be this age?" ("Building the Kingdom," p. 10).

President Hinckley paid this compliment to you as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met in the Salt Lake Temple on the day he was ordained and set apart as President of the Church. In the part that I remember, he said: "She is a woman of great faith. She is a wonderful mother. How I love her."

Sister Hinckley, you are a wonderful example to all of us. May the Lord continue to bless you with good health and a long, long life. May each of us catch the enthusiastic spirit you have for the gospel of our Lord and Savior, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. Elder Perry, we endorse everything you've said about Sister Hinckley. She's a wonderful woman in the Church.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, who was sustained at October conference as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Rebuilding a damaged life

Recently while traveling on an unfamiliar road, I encountered a large temporary sign declaring *Rough Road Ahead*, and indeed it was. Had I not been warned, that experience would have been disastrous. Life is like that. It's full of rough spots. Some are tests to make us stronger. Others result from our own disobedience. Helpful warnings in our personal life can also save us from disaster. A damaged road presents the same obstacles to every traveler until others repair it. The highway of life is different. Each one of us encounters unique challenges meant for growth. Also, our own bad choices can put more barriers in the path. Yet we have the capacity to smooth out the way, to fill in the depressions, and to beautify our

course. The process is called repentance; the destination is forgiveness.

If you have ignored warnings and your life has been damaged or disabled by a rough road, there is help available. Through that help you can renew and rebuild your damaged life. You can start over again and change your course from a downward, twisting, disappointing path to a superhighway to peace and happiness.

I want to help you find that relief. To do that it is necessary to give you some background information that will make the remedy more logical and the steps to healing more meaningful.

### Understand the Atonement

Every incorrect choice we make, every sin we commit is a violation of eternal law. That violation generally brings



negative results we soon recognize. There are also other consequences of our acts of which we may not be conscious. They are nonetheless real. They can have a tremendous effect on the quality of our life here and most certainly will powerfully affect it hereafter. We can do nothing of ourselves to satisfy the demands of justice for a broken eternal law. Yet unless the demands of justice are paid, each of us will suffer endless negative consequences.

Only the life, teachings, and particularly the atonement of Jesus Christ can release us from this otherwise impossible predicament. Each of us has made mistakes, large or small, which if unresolved will keep us from the presence of God. For this reason the atonement of Jesus Christ is the single most significant event that ever has or ever will occur. This selfless act of infinite consequence, performed by a single glorified personage, has eternal impact in the life of every son and daughter of our Father in Heaven—without exception.<sup>1</sup> It shatters the bonds of death. It justifies our finally being judged by the Master.<sup>2</sup> It can prevent an eternity under the control of the devil.<sup>3</sup> It opens the gates to exaltation and eternal life for all who qualify for forgiveness through repentance and obedience.<sup>4</sup>

The Redeemer can settle your individual account with justice and grant forgiveness through the merciful path of repentance.<sup>5</sup> Full repentance is absolutely essential for the Atonement to work its complete miracle in your life. By understanding the Atonement, you will see that God is not a jealous being who delights in persecuting those who misstep. He is an absolutely perfect, compassionate, understanding, patient, and forgiving Father. He is willing to entreat, counsel, strengthen, lift, and fortify. He so loves each of us that He was willing to have His perfect, sinless, absolutely obedient, totally righteous

Son experience indescribable agony and pain and give Himself in sacrifice for all.<sup>6</sup> Through that atonement we can live in a world where absolute justice reigns in its sphere so the world will have order. But that justice is tempered through mercy attainable by obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

### Repentance is the path to forgiveness

Which of us is not in need of the miracle of repentance? Whether your life is lightly blemished or heavily disfigured from mistakes, the principles of recovery are the same. The length and severity of the treatments are conditioned to fit the circumstances. Our goal surely must be forgiveness. The only possible path to that goal is repentance, for it is written:

*"There is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. . . ."*

"The Lord [will] not come to redeem [His people] in their sins, but to redeem them *from* their sins.

"And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them *from* their sins *because of repentance*."<sup>7</sup>

Obedience and faith in the Savior give you power to resist temptation. Helaman taught, "It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to . . . endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall."<sup>8</sup>

Forgiveness comes through repentance. What is repentance? How is it accomplished? What are its consequences? These may seem to be simple questions, but it is clear that many do not know how to repent.

## Follow the steps of repentance

In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Spencer W. Kimball gives a superb guide to forgiveness through repentance. It has helped many find their way back. He identifies five essential elements of repentance:

**Sorrow for sin.** Study and ponder to determine how serious the Lord defines your transgression to be. That will bring healing sorrow and remorse. It will also bring a sincere desire for change and a willingness to submit to every requirement for forgiveness. Alma taught, "Justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved."<sup>9</sup>

**Abandonment of sin.** This is an unyielding, permanent resolve to not repeat the transgression. By keeping this commitment, the bitter aftertaste of that sin need not be experienced again. Remember, "But unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return."<sup>10</sup> Joseph Smith declared: "Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not . . . pleasing in the sight of God."<sup>11</sup>

**Confession of sin.** You always need to confess your sins to the Lord. If they are serious transgressions, such as immorality, they need to be confessed to a bishop or stake president. Please understand that confession is not repentance. It is an essential step but is not of itself adequate. Partial confession by mentioning lesser mistakes will not help you resolve a more serious, undisclosed transgression. Essential to forgiveness is a willingness to fully disclose to the Lord and, where necessary, His priesthood judge *all* that you have done. Remember, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."<sup>12</sup>

**Restitution for sin.** You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen,

damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent.

**Obedience to all the commandments.** Full obedience brings the complete power of the gospel into your life with strength to focus on the abandonment of specific sins. It includes things you might not initially consider part of repentance, such as attending meetings, paying tithing, giving service, and forgiving others. The Lord said, "He that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.*"<sup>13</sup>

I would add a sixth step: *Recognition of the Savior.* Of all the necessary steps to repentance, I testify that the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that forgiveness comes because of the Redeemer. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. Witness Alma's declaration: "I was . . . in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul."<sup>14</sup> You will be helped as you exercise *faith in Jesus Christ.*<sup>15</sup> That means you trust Him and you trust His teachings. Satan would have you believe that serious transgression cannot be entirely overcome. The Savior gave His life so that the effects of all transgression can be put behind us, save the shedding of innocent blood and the denial of the Holy Ghost.

The fruit of true repentance is forgiveness, which opens the door to receive all of the covenants and ordinances provided on this earth and to enjoy the resulting blessings. When a repentant soul is baptized, all former sins are forgiven and need not be remembered. When repentance is full and one has been cleansed, there comes a new vision of life and its glorious possibilities. How marvelous the promise of the Lord:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>16</sup> The Lord is and ever will be faithful to His words.

### Serious sins require deep repentance

Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us.

Adultery, fornication, committing homosexual acts, and other deviations approaching these in gravity are not acceptable alternate lifestyles. They are serious sins. Committing physical and sexual abuse are major sins. Such grave sins require deep repentance to be forgiven. President Kimball taught: "To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin."<sup>17</sup> "It is unthinkable that God absolves serious sins upon a few requests. He is likely to wait until there has been long, sustained repentance."<sup>18</sup>

If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment.

### Repent now

Sometimes the steps of repentance are initially difficult and painful, like the cleansing of a soiled garment. Yet they produce purity, peace of mind, self-

respect, hope, and, finally, a new person with a renewed life and abundance of opportunity.

This scripture will help you know what to do: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God."<sup>19</sup>

In closing, with all the tenderness and sincerity of heart I invite each one of you to thoughtfully review your life. Have you deviated from the standards that you know will bring happiness? Is there a dark corner that needs to be cleaned out? Are you now doing things that you know are wrong? Do you fill your mind with unclean thoughts? When it is quiet and you can think clearly, does your conscience tell you to repent?

For your peace now and for everlasting happiness, please repent. Open your heart to the Lord and ask Him to help you. You will earn the blessing of forgiveness, peace, and the knowledge you have been purified and made whole. Find the courage to ask the Lord for strength to repent *now*. I solemnly witness that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. I know that He lives. I testify that He loves you personally and will help you.

Obtain His forgiveness by repenting *now*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Mosiah 5:10-13.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:10.
3. See 2 Nephi 9:7-9.
4. See 2 Nephi 2:5-8.
5. See Alma 42:15.
6. See Helaman 5:9.
7. Helaman 5:9-11; italics added.
8. Helaman 5:12.
9. Alma 42:24.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 82:7.
11. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 148.

12. Proverbs 28:13.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:32; italics added.
14. Alma 38:8.
15. See Alma 11:40; 2 Nephi 9:22–24.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
17. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 353.
18. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 85.
19. Helaman 3:35.

## Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

### Celebrating covenants

President Hinckley, as a leader of the young women of the Church, may I speak for them in saying we love, support, and sustain you as our prophet.

Dear brothers and sisters, standing here so soon after my call is much like being thrown into a mountain lake of glacial runoff—I am still getting used to the shock. You see, I am the mother of sons. Four sons. That's right. Sons. You'd think that I would have been called to be the general den mother. Instead, my long desire for daughters has been filled twice: first with four fantastic daughters-in-law, and second with half a million young women around the world. Each one is unique and individually numbered and known in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. How do I know this? Because Heavenly Father has reached His tender hand from the heavens to hold and help me, Bonnie Parkin. Because the light of His Son has warmed my soul. Because I have made promises and covenants that have transformed my life as I've kept them.

Have covenants renewed your life? Do you celebrate them?

### Celebrating a granddaughter's blessing

Recently we went to Pasadena, California, to the blessing of our first granddaughter, Jordan Emily. This was a unique experience for two reasons: First, my husband and I thought the Parkins were unable to have girls. And second, this blessing was the first official step

in her mortality as a daughter of God. We feel so much joy as we anticipate the potential her life holds here.

Jordan was fortunate. She was born to her parents who were sealed in the temple under the new and everlasting covenant. Provided her parents remain true to this agreement, Jordan will be beneficiary to those covenants by being in a home filled mostly with peace, love, protection, and understanding. Being born in the covenant is not the privilege of all members of the Church, but the blessings of the covenant will be made available to all who are worthy of them.

We hope little Jordan's life as a faithful Latter-day Saint will move from a baby receiving a priesthood blessing, to a child of God receiving baptismal covenants, to a young woman keeping those first promises and preparing to be worthy and qualified to make and keep sacred covenants, to a woman entering into temple covenants, to a wife being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and finally to an exalted daughter returning home to our Heavenly Father's open arms. This is our journey as Saints.

### What are covenants?

So often we talk of making and keeping covenants, but exactly what are they? At baptism we demonstrate that we "are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah

18:8-9). And that's just the beginning! In the temple we further covenant to be obedient, to sacrifice, to keep ourselves worthily pure, to contribute to the spreading of truth, to be chaste, to pray, to live the gospel, and to be forever faithful.

### Heaven's emphasis is on individuals

Father in Heaven knows us as individuals. The covenants we make with Him are performed one-on-one. President Howard W. Hunter noted:

"I have always been impressed that the Lord deals with us personally, individually. We do many things in groups in the Church, . . . but . . . the *most* important things . . . are done individually. We bless babies one at a time, even if they are twins or triplets. We baptize and confirm children one at a time. We take the sacrament, are ordained to the priesthood, or move through the ordinances of the temple as individuals—as one person developing a [personal] relationship with our Father in Heaven. . . . *Heaven's emphasis is on each individual, on every single person*" ("Eternal Investments" [address to CES religious educators, 10 Feb. 1989], p. 4; italics added).

### Covenants should bless our daily lives

These individual commitments made directly with our Heavenly Father are things to celebrate and consecrate! Do you remember what happened when Alma invited his people to make these covenants? They celebrated! They "clapped their hands with joy." I wonder why our covenants so often feel more like obligations than privileges.

How did you feel the last time you partook of the sacrament? Did you ponder those covenants made in fonts and within temples? The sacrament enables us to renew our covenants. Thus, if we keep those covenants with honor and exactness, we can feel as fresh and as pure as we did when we were first bap-

tized. We can feel as committed to a temple sealing as we did as a new bride or groom. We can feel as loved of God as our sweet little Jordan did when she received her name and blessing. Covenants keep us new.

Do those covenants change the actions of our *daily* lives? They should, even though it may be a struggle to keep them.

### Covenants anchor us during adversity

We hear of Saints who hold on to their covenants even against great odds and in so doing find renewal and peace—not just in the life to come but in *this* life—because just like covenant breaking, covenant keeping becomes habit-forming.

We have all been victims of evil and unrighteousness, pain and suffering. I know a woman who was a victim. Her husband chose to be unfaithful to her. She suffered and she was in pain. It took many years, but life got better for her because she remained faithful to her covenants.

There are both stormy seas and calm waters in life. But as Ether tells us, "Hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4). Covenants anchor us to solid ground, which, amidst the storms, makes our promises *not only meaningful for eternity but vital for today*. Have your covenants moved you to sing the song of redeeming love?

### Helping youth keep covenants

At a Relief Society meeting a group of women were discussing how to teach youth to make and keep covenants. One woman, who was struggling with a teenage daughter, listened as the women talked about faith, prayer, good example, and scriptures. Finally she blurted

out, "I've tried all those things! And they're not working!" Quietly she added, "Love is all that is working for us right now." This good sister trusted that somehow her covenant to be charitable (even to her daughter) would make a difference. And it is.

Another young woman, Katie, was at camp. She felt angry and abandoned because of overwhelming family problems. Her testimony teetered in serious jeopardy. But a concerned leader, in an effort to live up to his holy calling, wrote Katie a note saying, "I love you. I believe in you. You have a testimony, because I have heard you bear it in these ways." Then he listed those ways. The note arrived at the right time; Katie was strengthened to live *her* covenants because someone else strived to live his.

Mark, a high school student in my ward, recently stood in fast meeting and talked about how he was finding strength to live his covenants. He summed it up with this formula succinctly and memorably. He said, "A scripture a day keeps Satan away."

### Blessings of covenant keeping

What are the rewards of covenant keeping? Gentle-hearted King Benjamin said: "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . . And under this head ye are made free" (Mosiah 5:7-8). And we will "be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9).

Brothers and sisters, covenant keeping will help you recall the One with whom you're yoked, and your burden will be lighter.

If you have slipped in your covenants, take heart! The Savior so wants us to fulfill our promises that He has provided an everlasting atonement. If your heart is not singing the song of re-

deeming love, return to your covenants. Celebrate them. Like our new granddaughter, you too can be pure. The renewal of your covenants will awaken you like cold glacial waters on a hot day. Then remember, millions of Church members all around the globe are daily keeping covenants against all odds. *You can too.*

If you remember only one thing I say today, remember to *hold on to your covenants and celebrate them*. My covenants are an expression of my faith; they are why I stand before you today. Covenants help me focus on the big picture and not just on the immediate. As my sons have served missions, I have seen covenants further the work of the Lord. Covenants help me make a difference in the lives of others. My covenants are not negotiable. They make the choice of righteousness easier. I humbly pray that our covenants might become a greater source of celebration and strength in our lives; that we may walk uprightly and steadfastly, that when we most need the Lord's hand, it will be there waiting warmly. I treasure the covenants He has made with me and with all my heart hope to live faithful to them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice," after which Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who was sustained at October conference as a member of the Seventy, will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

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## Elder Andrew W. Peterson

### Easter reflections

In two weeks we will celebrate Easter. Our thoughts and feelings will, hopefully, focus on Jesus Christ. For many people this will be another Easter that will casually come and casually go. For some this Easter will be a season of meditation, reflection, and appreciation.

There is one special Easter that I vividly recall, experienced twenty-seven years ago as a missionary serving in the North Argentine Mission. Our mission had sent missionaries into southern Bolivia. That Easter Sunday 1968 I spent in Quiriza, Bolivia, a small village nestled in the foothills of the Altiplano of southern Bolivia. I remember the preparations made by the villagers for that Easter. The mood, the music, the feel of that moment still linger with me to this day.

Early on Easter Sunday morning, Elder Arce asked me if I would accompany him to visit an investigator family. Shortly thereafter we walked down the dirt streets of that small village with adobe homes lining the way. We visited the family, reviewing important questions such as, Where do we come from? Why are we here? and Where are we going? We drew pictures with our fingers in the dirt floor. The Spirit was present. A baptismal invitation was extended and accepted. A beautiful baptismal service was held that afternoon. We baptized in the nearby muddy waters of the San Juan de Oro River. Seasons are reversed in South America. When it is springtime here, it is fall there.

Those being baptized disappeared behind large, freshly cut stacks of cornstalks, only to reappear dressed in beautiful white baptismal clothing. Their brown skin, black hair, and radiant smiles still linger to this day in my mind's eye. The power of that Easter Sunday still

moistens my eyes as I reflect on the universality of Christ's invitation to all to come unto Him.

### Fulfilling missionary promises

For me, to have administered in His name as a missionary among those people prompted thoughts of Jesus talking to His disciples during His earthly ministry. He said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

Before we left Quiriza, Bolivia, for Argentina, we offered a special prayer. Accompanied by a dear missionary companion, kneeling on a dirt soccer field under the stars, the two of us took turns pouring out our hearts to our Heavenly Father. There were expressions of love and gratitude for the people, for our mission president, and for the privilege of being missionaries. Promises were made to help the people.

The years since my mission have provided opportunities for the fulfillment of those missionary promises. I returned home to marry my high school sweetheart, Christine Swensen. She is a wonderful companion, and I love her dearly. As a registered nurse she worked helping us to get through dental school. As school was drawing to a close and our sixth wedding anniversary was upon us, we were still without children. Then a door opened and an opportunity presented itself, and Ashley came into our lives—our dear, precious Ashley.

A year later we traveled to Bolivia to bring Joshua home from an orphanage. He was two years old. I can still see that beautiful little boy walking to me with outstretched arms, saying, "Papa, Papa."

Megan then joined us, not even twenty-four hours old when we brought

her home. Then back to Bolivia for Daniel, five months old when we held him for the first time.

Several years later, while I was presiding over the Mexico Merida Mission, Jennifer joined our family—a beautiful two-week-old Guatemalan baby girl born in Mexico. She opened the hearts of our missionaries and members in southern Mexico. Natalie Joy came into our family three weeks before our mission ended. Her middle name, Joy, is an eternal reminder of the witness we received that she should be included in our family.

After sixteen years of marriage and six adoptions, Anne and Andrew naturally joined our family, to the joy and happiness of their brothers and sisters. As a family we are forever grateful for the binding and sealing effect the temple provides for the members of Jesus Christ's church.

With special promises made to the Lord under the stars in Bolivia at Easter time 1968, there is not a day goes by but that Chris and I embrace our children and feel of God's love for all of His children. And now, as with Easter 1968, for me Easter season 1995 will be one never to be forgotten.

### Remembrances of President Hunter

Six months ago as members of the Church we sustained President Howard W. Hunter as the fourteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was sustained in that conference as a new Seventy. In early March, President Hunter passed away. My mind is fresh with remembrances of him. We will never forget President Hunter telling our children at the time I was set apart: "We love you. We want you to feel comfortable around us. We want you to feel like we are family." Following our setting apart, President Hunter and his counselors, President Hinckley and President Monson, shook hands with each of

our children—a treasured moment. Six months following that setting apart, I now stand before you for the first time to speak as a General Authority in the Tabernacle.

### Reflections on President Hinckley

And President Gordon B. Hinckley has been sustained as the fifteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

During a visit twenty-seven years ago to South America, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke to missionaries. He was younger then. He had served but seven years as an Apostle. He shared a scripture and extended an invitation. He taught from 2 Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (1:7-8).

Elder Hinckley invited missionaries to not fear and not be ashamed of their testimonies of Jesus Christ. His invitation penetrated my heart as a missionary then and is equally important to me and to you this day. The Lord has raised up a new prophet—one who has no fear, one who is full of power and love and of a sound mind, and one who by example reminds us never to be ashamed of our testimony of the Lord.

May this be an Easter season of meditation, reflection, and appreciation. May we resolve to be obedient to prophetic invitations from those who hold the keys of the kingdom. A favorite hymn says:

There is sunshine in my soul today,  
More glorious and bright  
Than glows in any earthly sky,  
For Jesus is my light.  
["There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227]

Jesus is my light. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## President Monson

Thank you, Elder Andrew W. Peterson, for that beautiful testimony.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, also a member of the Seventy, will now speak to us.

## Elder LeGrand R. Curtis

### A table encircled with love

Much has been written about the importance of the home. Elder Marion G. Romney has told us that "at the heart of society's fatal sickness is the instability of the family."<sup>1</sup> We recognize that some homes are large, graciously appointed, even luxurious. Others are very small and humble, with scant furnishings. Yet each and every "home can be a heav'n on earth when we are filled with love, . . . where we want to be," as one of our beloved hymns reminds us.<sup>2</sup>

One of the more important furnishings found in most homes is the kitchen table. Now it may be small, it may be large, or in the form of a little counter with barely room to put the food and utensils. Its major function seems to be a place for the different members of the family to receive nourishment.

On this special occasion my desire is to bring your attention to a deeper, more important function for the kitchen table, where we can receive much more than nourishment for our physical well-being.

### Gospel discussions around the table

A family generally has two or more members of differing ages, but the family needs to meet—preferably not just to eat but to pray, to talk, to listen, to relate, to learn, and to grow together. President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated it so well:

"My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair.

Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation."<sup>3</sup>

Most family members are subjected to the many forces of the world outside of the home, as well as the powerful influence of radio, television, videotapes, and many other things which we bring into our homes.

Picture a family gathering around a table, perhaps the kitchen table, talking about the gospel, talking about the sacrament meetings, the messages, talking about the current *Ensign* or the current *New Era*, talking about school with all of its ramifications, talking about general conference, talking about the Sunday School lessons, listening to good music, talking about Jesus Christ and his teachings. The list could be expanded. Not only parents but all family members would be wise to make certain that each person present has a chance to talk and ample opportunity to participate.

### Family prayer around the table

Think of the potential of a family kneeling around a table (without television), praying, pleading for help, thanking our Father for blessings—teaching all ages the importance of a loving Father in Heaven. Family prayer with little ones may well develop older ones who someday will pray with their families.

Elder Thomas S. Monson stated it well:

"The Lord directed that we have family prayer when he said: 'Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.' (3 Nephi 18:21.)

"Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother, and each of the children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As [a] father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord's bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don't you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that these fine sons in the family will live worthy that they may in due time receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don't we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?"<sup>4</sup>

As many have said, "How could you possibly send your parents and your children out into the world each day without gathering together and talking to the Lord?" Wise parents will examine their schedules and plan at least one time daily to gather the family for the blessings of prayer. Very soon, young members learn how to take their turn and learn the precious values found in family prayer.

### **Make home a happy place**

I have stated before that "home should be a happy place because all work to keep it that way. It is said that

happiness is homemade, and we should endeavor to make our homes happy and pleasant places for us and our children. A happy home is one centered around the teachings of the gospel. This takes constant, careful effort by all concerned."<sup>5</sup>

A busy teenager in a rather large family complained about the amount of time that family prayer was taking. As the wise mother was praying the next day, she intentionally left that youngster out of the prayer. As the prayer concluded, the busy child said, "Mother, you left me out of the prayer!" The loving mother explained that she was just responding to the youngster's complaint. The busy child complained, "Don't leave me out."

### **Scripture study around the table**

Visualize a family surrounding a table with the scriptures open, discussing the many truths and lessons to absorb. This indeed is a table encircled with love!

Educators agree that children need to read much more outside of school. We can bless our children by reading the scriptures with them on a daily basis—at the kitchen table.

To have a time when the family meets at the kitchen table may take considerable adjustment and careful planning, but what could be of more importance to the unity of the family, the spiritual growth of the family, the bridges built between members of a family as they talk, listen, and respond, surrounded by love? Our major success is simply trying—over and over.

### **Strengthen family ties**

There are many forces in the world today seeking to decimate the family and the home. Wise parents will strive to strengthen family ties, increase spirituality in the home, and focus on Jesus

Christ and temple activity. President Hunter has told us:

"I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. . . .

"Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy."<sup>6</sup>

The direction given by President Hunter can be markedly enhanced by what takes place around the kitchen table.

In our homes we should practice how to treat others. As Goethe said so well, "If you treat [an individual] as he is he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he . . . could be [and might be], he will [become what he ought to be]."<sup>7</sup>

### Make homes places of devotion

Elder Boyd K. Packer stated: "To bring some of the things of heaven into the home is to insure that family members will graduate to church participation. The family home evening is, of course, ready-made for this—a meeting at home that can be organized to fit every need; and it's just as much a church meeting, or can be, as those held at the chapel."<sup>8</sup>

This counsel also agrees with what Elder Dean L. Larsen has told us: "Our church buildings are not the only places where we can worship. Our homes should also be places of devotion. It would be well if each day we could 'go home to church.' There should be no other place

where the Spirit of the Lord is more welcome and more easily accessible than in our own homes."<sup>9</sup>

As we work to accomplish all of this in our homes, we will do well to remember the important statement of President Harold B. Lee: "Remember that the most important of the Lord's work that you [and I] will ever do will be . . . within the walls of [our] own home."<sup>10</sup>

My plea today is that each of us will look carefully at our homes and at the kitchen table and continually strive to bring heaven into our homes and come unto Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. "Scriptures As They Relate to Family Stability," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, p. 57.
2. "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth," *Hymns*, no. 298.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, pp. 74–75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p. 54.
4. *Pathways to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973), pp. 26–27.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 13; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 12.
6. In *Ensign*, July 1994, pp. 4–5.
7. In Emerson Roy West, *Vital Quotations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 171.
8. "Begin Where You Are—At Home," *Ensign*, Feb. 1972, p. 71.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, p. 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, p. 63.
10. *Strengthening the Home* (pamphlet, 1973), p. 7.

### President Monson

We have just heard from Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Apostasy and restoration

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has many beliefs in common with other Christian churches. But we have differences, and those differences explain why we send missionaries to other Christians, why we build temples in addition to churches, and why our beliefs bring us such happiness and strength to deal with the challenges of life and death. I wish to speak about some of the important additions our doctrines make to the Christian faith. My subject is apostasy and restoration.

Last year searchers discovered a Roman fort and city in the Sinai close to the Suez Canal. Though once a major city, its location had been covered by desert sands and its existence had been forgotten for hundreds of years (see "Remains of Roman Fortress Emerge from Sinai Desert," *Deseret News*, 6 Oct. 1994, p. A20). Discoveries like this contradict the common assumption that knowledge increases with the passage of time. In fact, on some matters the general knowledge of mankind regresses as some important truths are distorted or ignored and eventually forgotten. For example, the American Indians were in many respects more successful at living in harmony with nature than our modern society is. Similarly modern artists and craftsmen have been unable to recapture some of the superior techniques and materials of the past, like the varnish on a Stradivarius violin.

We would be wiser if we could restore the knowledge of some important things that have been distorted, ignored, or forgotten. This also applies to religious knowledge. It explains the need for the gospel restoration we proclaim.

### True nature of the Godhead

When Joseph Smith was asked to explain the major tenets of our faith, he

wrote what we now call the Articles of Faith. The first article states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." The Prophet later declared that "the simple and first principles of the gospel" include knowing "for a certainty the character of God" ("Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 15 Aug. 1844, p. 614). We must begin with the truth about God and our relationship to him. Everything else follows from that.

In common with the rest of Christianity, we believe in a Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. However, we testify that these three members of the Godhead are three separate and distinct beings. We also testify that God the Father is not just a spirit but is a glorified person with a tangible body, as is his resurrected Son, Jesus Christ.

When first communicated to mankind by prophets, the teachings we now have in the Bible were "plain and pure, and most precious and easy" to understand (1 Nephi 14:23). Even in the transmitted and translated version we have today, the Bible language confirms that God the Father and his resurrected Son, Jesus Christ, are tangible, separate beings. To cite only two of many such teachings, the Bible declares that man was created in the image of God, and it describes three separate members of the Godhead manifested at the baptism of Jesus (see Genesis 1:27; Matthew 3:13-17).

In contrast, many Christians reject the idea of a tangible, personal God and a Godhead of three separate beings. They believe that God is a spirit and that the Godhead is only one God. In our view these concepts are evidence of the falling away we call the Great Apostasy.

### Creed's change concept of Deity

We maintain that the concepts identified by such nonscriptural terms as

"the incomprehensible mystery of God" and "the mystery of the Holy Trinity" are attributable to the ideas of Greek philosophy. These philosophical concepts transformed Christianity in the first few centuries following the deaths of the Apostles. For example, philosophers then maintained that physical matter was evil and that God was a spirit without feelings or passions. Persons of this persuasion, including learned men who became influential converts to Christianity, had a hard time accepting the simple teachings of early Christianity: an Only Begotten Son who said he was in the express image of his Father in Heaven and who taught his followers to be one as he and his Father were one, and a Messiah who died on a cross and later appeared to his followers as a resurrected being with flesh and bones.

The collision between the speculative world of Greek philosophy and the simple, literal faith and practice of the earliest Christians produced sharp contentions that threatened to widen political divisions in the fragmenting Roman empire. This led Emperor Constantine to convene the first churchwide council in A.D. 325. The action of this council of Nicaea remains the most important single event after the death of the Apostles in formulating the modern Christian concept of deity. The Nicene Creed erased the idea of the separate being of Father and Son by defining God the Son as being of "one substance with the Father."

Other councils followed, and from their decisions and the writings of churchmen and philosophers there came a synthesis of Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine in which the orthodox Christians of that day lost the fulness of truth about the nature of God and the Godhead. The consequences persist in the various creeds of Christianity, which declare a Godhead of only one being and which describe that single being or God

as "incomprehensible" and "without body, parts, or passions." One of the distinguishing features of the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its rejection of all of these post-biblical creeds (see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991]; *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 1:56-58, 1:393-404, 2:548-53).

In the process of what we call the Apostasy, the tangible, personal God described in the Old and New Testaments was replaced by the abstract, incomprehensible deity defined by compromise with the speculative principles of Greek philosophy. The received language of the Bible remained, but the so-called hidden meanings of scriptural words were now explained in the vocabulary of a philosophy alien to their origins. In the language of that philosophy, God the Father ceased to be a Father in any but an allegorical sense. He ceased to exist as a comprehensible and compassionate being. And the separate identity of his Only Begotten Son was swallowed up in a philosophical abstraction that attempted to define a common substance and an incomprehensible relationship.

These descriptions of a religious philosophy are surely undiplomatic, but I hasten to add that Latter-day Saints do not apply such criticism to the men and women who profess these beliefs. We believe that most religious leaders and followers are sincere believers who love God and understand and serve him to the best of their abilities. We are indebted to the men and women who kept the light of faith and learning alive through the centuries to the present day. We have only to contrast the lesser light that exists among peoples unfamiliar with the names of God and Jesus Christ to realize the great contribution made by Christian teachers through the ages. We honor them as servants of God.

## Truth restored in the First Vision

Then came the First Vision. An unschooled boy, seeking knowledge from the ultimate source, saw two personages of indescribable brightness and glory and heard one of them say, while pointing to the other, "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The divine teaching in that vision began the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God the Son told the boy prophet that all the "creeds" of the churches of that day "were an abomination in his sight" (v. 19). We affirm that this divine declaration was a condemnation of the creeds, not of the faithful seekers who believed in them. Joseph Smith's first vision showed that the prevailing concepts of the nature of God and the Godhead were untrue and could not lead their adherents to the destiny God desired for them.

After a subsequent outpouring of modern scripture and revelation, this modern prophet declared, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22).

This belief does not mean that we claim sufficient spiritual maturity to comprehend God. Nor do we equate our imperfect mortal bodies to his immortal, glorified being. But we can comprehend the fundamentals he has revealed about himself and the other members of the Godhead. And that knowledge is essential to our understanding of the purpose of mortal life and of our eternal destiny as resurrected beings after mortal life.

## Life's purpose: to become like God

In the theology of the restored church of Jesus Christ, the purpose of mortal life is to prepare us to realize our destiny as sons and daughters of God—to become like him. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young both taught that "no

man . . . can know himself unless he knows God, and he can not know God unless he knows himself" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:75; see also *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 340). The Bible describes mortals as "the children of God" and as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17). It also declares that "we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17) and that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). We take these Bible teachings literally. We believe that the purpose of mortal life is to acquire a physical body and, through the atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, to qualify for the glorified, resurrected celestial state that is called exaltation or eternal life.

## Three degrees of glory

Like other Christians, we believe in a heaven or paradise and a hell following mortal life, but to us that two-part division of the righteous and the wicked is merely temporary while the spirits of the dead await their resurrections and final judgments. The destinations that follow the final judgments are much more diverse. Our restored knowledge of the separateness of the three members of the Godhead provides a key to help us understand the diversities of resurrected glory.

In their final judgment the children of God will be assigned to a kingdom of glory for which their obedience has qualified them. In his letters to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul described these places. He told of a vision in which he was "caught up to the third heaven" and "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4). Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, he described "celestial

bodies," "bodies terrestrial" (1 Corinthians 15:40), and "bodies telestial" (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40), each pertaining to a different degree of glory. He likened these different glories to the sun, to the moon, and to different stars (see 1 Corinthians 15:41).

We learn from modern revelation that these three different degrees of glory have a special relationship to the three different members of the Godhead.

The lowest degree is the telestial domain of those who "received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets" (D&C 76:101) and who have had to suffer for their wickedness. But even this degree has a glory that "surpasses all understanding" (D&C 76:89). Its occupants receive the Holy Spirit and the administering of angels, for even those who have been wicked will ultimately be "heirs of [this degree of] salvation" (D&C 76:88).

The next higher degree of glory, the terrestrial, "excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion" (D&C 76:91). The terrestrial is the abode of those who were the "honorable men of the earth" (D&C 76:75). Its most distinguishing feature is that those who qualify for terrestrial glory "receive of the presence of the Son" (v. 77). Concepts familiar to all Christians might liken this higher kingdom to heaven because it has the presence of the Son.

In contrast to traditional Christianity, we join with Paul in affirming the existence of a third or higher heaven. Modern revelation describes it as the celestial kingdom—the abode of those "whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God" (D&C 76:70). Those who qualify for this kingdom of glory "shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever" (D&C 76:62). Those who have met the highest requirements for this kingdom, including faithfulness to covenants made in a temple of God and

marriage for eternity, will be exalted to the godlike state referred to as the "fulness" of the Father or eternal life (D&C 76:56, 94; see also D&C 131; 132:19–20). (This destiny of eternal life or God's life should be familiar to all who have studied the ancient Christian doctrine of and belief in deification or apotheosis.) For us, eternal life is not a mystical union with an incomprehensible spirit-god. Eternal life is family life with a loving Father in Heaven and with our progenitors and our posterity.

The theology of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is comprehensive, universal, merciful, and true. Following the necessary experience of mortal life, all sons and daughters of God will ultimately be resurrected and go to a kingdom of glory. The righteous—regardless of current religious denomination or belief—will ultimately go to a kingdom of glory more wonderful than any of us can comprehend. Even the wicked, or almost all of them, will ultimately go to a marvelous—though lesser—kingdom of glory. All of that will occur because of God's love for his children and because of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands" (D&C 76:43).

### **Church helps us achieve highest destiny**

The purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to help all of the children of God understand their potential and achieve their highest destiny. This church exists to provide the sons and daughters of God with the means of entrance into and exaltation in the celestial kingdom. This is a family-centered church in doctrine and practices. Our understanding of the nature and purpose of God the Eternal Father explains our destiny and our relationship in his eternal family. Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. Under the

merciful plan of the Father, all of this is possible through the atonement of the Only Begotten of the Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As earthly parents we participate in the gospel plan by providing mortal bodies for the spirit children of God. The fullness of eternal salvation is a family matter.

It is the reality of these glorious possibilities that causes us to proclaim our message of restored Christianity to all people, even to good practicing Christians with other beliefs. This is why we build temples. This is the faith that gives us strength and joy to confront the challenges of mortal life. We offer these truths and opportunities to all people and testify to their truthfulness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved President of the Church, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region, the combined institute men's

choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and uplifting music for this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters (my, have they been busy); and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle, some of which came from the members in Japan and Korea.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions in many countries.

We express appreciation for honored guests who have complimented us by their attendance today and in each of the sessions.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "God Bless Our Prophet Dear." The benediction will then be offered by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

## **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

### **The miracle of conference**

My brethren and sisters, just a few words in conclusion. First, I'd like to say that we have participated in a miracle. As I have listened to all who have spoken, I have noted that there has been no duplication of treatment. Every man and woman who has spoken has chosen his or her own theme to treat. There are no assignments made to any of the speakers concerning what they should say. And yet they all fit together in a pattern that

is beautiful and wonderful. I have a profound feeling of gratitude to the Lord for His wonderful blessings upon us. We have listened to wise and inspired counsel. We have been taught and we have been edified.

### **Strength of the new generation**

A week ago a conference of the young women was held in this tabernacle. It was an inspiration to look into their faces, thousands of them. One



could not do so without a feeling of peace and certitude concerning the future of this work. The theme of the conference was an appeal to the young women to read the scriptures.

I look back to my own youth. Neither young men nor young women were doing much scripture reading at that time. What a marvelous change has been wrought. A new generation is arising who are familiar with the word of the Lord. Growing up in a worldly environment that is laden with immorality and filth of every kind, our youth, for the most part, are meeting the challenge of living in the world without partaking of the evils of the world. It is with the young men as it is with the young women. Last evening this tabernacle was filled with fathers and sons, and hundreds of thousands were gathered in other halls across the Church. It is wonderful to feel the pulse of this generation of young people. Of course, there are some who do not measure up. That has been the case since the time of the great war in heaven described by John the Revelator. The issue then was free agency, as it is today. Then, as now, choices had to be made.

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

That ancient struggle continues, the unrelenting battle that comes of free agency. Some, unfortunately, choose the wrong. But many, so many, choose the right, including so very many of our choice young men and young women. They deserve and need our gratitude. They need our encouragement. They need the kind of examples that we can

become before them. May they be blessed as they pursue lives of virtue, of learning, of growing with faith and purpose, all the time remaining "true to the faith that [their] parents have cherished, true to the truth for which martyrs have perished" ("True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254).

### **We have a work to do**

In the Young Women conference, emphasis was given to the words of Alma found in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Alma. His teachings include these words: "Awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith" (v. 27).

My beloved associates, far more of us need to awake and arouse our faculties to an awareness of the great everlasting truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us can do a little better than we have been doing. We can be a little more kind. We can be a little more merciful. We can be a little more forgiving. We can put behind us our weaknesses of the past and go forth with new energy and increased resolution to improve the world about us, in our homes, in our places of employment, in our social activities.

We have work to do, you and I, so very much of it. Let us roll up our sleeves and get at it, with a new commitment, putting our trust in the Lord.

Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;  
But with joy wend your way.  
Though hard to you this journey may appear,  
Grace shall be as your day.  
["Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30]

We can do it, if we will be prayerful and faithful. We can do better than we have ever done before.

The Church needs your strength. It needs your love and loyalty and devo-

tion. It needs a little more of your time and energy.

I am not asking anyone to give more at the expense of his or her employer. We have an obligation to be men and women of absolute honesty and integrity in the service of those who employ us.

I am not asking anyone to do so at the expense of your families. The Lord will hold you responsible for your children. But I am suggesting that we spend a little less time in idleness, in the fruitless pursuit of watching some inane and empty television programs. Time so utilized can be put to better advantage, and the consequences will be wonderful. Of that I do not hesitate to assure you.

**"We will be true to thee till death!"**

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, as we return to our homes, may we go in safety, pondering the things we have heard these past two days. May we go with determination to try a little harder to be a little better. Please know that we are not without understanding of some of your problems. We are aware that many of you carry very heavy burdens. We plead with the Lord in your be-

half. We add our prayers to your prayers that you may find solutions to your problems. We leave a blessing upon you, even an apostolic blessing. We bless you that the Lord may smile with favor upon you, that there may be happiness and peace in your homes and in your lives, that an atmosphere of love and respect and appreciation may be felt among husbands and wives, children and parents. May you "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47) with happiness, with security, with peace, with faith.

At the opening of this session, the choir sang a wonderful hymn. "Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!" ("Faith of Our Fathers," *Hymns*, no. 84). I would like to leave that thought with you: "Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!" God bless you, my beloved associates, in this glorious work, I humbly pray in the name of Him whom we all serve, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "God Bless Our Prophet Dear."

Bishop H. David Burton offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Springville Utah Region. James Kasen conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a men's choir from the Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake University, and Orem institutes provided the music. Duane Huff con-

ducted the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference

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